

Ms. Lori Dawe  
Parliamentary Assistant to the Honorable Joe Clark

Dear Lori,

Here are a number of questions that I am interested in receiving comments from the Honorable Joe Clark. He has been one of my most admired Canadian politicians ever since I became interested in Canadian politics in the early 1990's. I would appreciate greatly the opportunity to be able to meet with him. However, please do not hesitate to let me know as to what questions he would be happy to entertain. Thanks.

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Some Questions about the Charlottetown Constitutional Process

a) "Western alienation" and the Charlottetown constitutional campaign:

As I understand it, this term describes negative grass-root feelings in Western Canada toward the political leadership/structures that you characterized in the following statements in your speech on the occasion of the 10-year anniversary of the Charlottetown Accord, "the structures, practices and mentality of the national government were set in place before Western Canada had the power to influence them, and simply do not serve the present, future and legitimate interests of a region transformed by exceptional growth and diversity and dynamism".

It is somewhat puzzling to me that the Charlottetown accord, formed on the basis of broad nationwide consultations, and backed up by a strong group of political leaders from the west including yourself and Ms. Kim Campbell, fared rather disappointingly in the national referendum in the western provinces.

Is there a clearly identifiable explanation(s) for this? Could it be that the western populace found the referendum a good occasion to vent their angers, regardless of the substances in it for the west's interests? Or could it be that the final form of the accord was perceived as relatively weak for the interests of the west, and therefore did not satisfy the voters? If the latter were the case, what would be your view of what to blame, the difficult-to-satisfy appetite of the west (analogous to what former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau commented on about the popular mood in Quebec), or certain aspects of the accord desire to be improved?

b) Bring Quebec into the constitution, and the balance between the interests of Quebec and those of the western provinces:

It has often been said by the political commentators, that among the Canadian provinces, the western provinces' interests may be the most opposed to those of

Quebec's, but that, at the same time, both regions, or at least many people in both regions, share the same desire to bring about a better political representation for their region through constitutional reforms.

Therefore, when the Charlottetown accord did not do well in the national referendum in the western provinces and in the referendum in Quebec, it appeared to be evidence of regional conflicts being hard to resolve.

What is your opinion on this issue, that the gaps between the interests of the two regions were indeed difficult to bridge and the Charlottetown accord did as much as could be done at the time, armed with the knowledge and wisdom gained through expert and grass-root consultations? Could it be, instead, that some elements of the accord may not have been very good in this area, even in your judgment?

c) Your contributions to the Charlottetown constitutional process, vs. contributions by former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney:

As the Minister for Constitutional Affairs throughout the Charlottetown constitutional process, you were in charge of the process from conferences and consultations, through negotiations, conception and finalization of the accord, to the campaign for the referendum. Your contributions were certainly second-to-none. Many people, including myself, would feel that you justifiably had the best qualifications and distinction for the duty.

Prime Minister Mulroney, if I remember correctly, intervened in major ways at several points in the process, and made distinctive marks on the process. One of Mr. Mulroney's decisions was the calling of a national referendum. From my reading of your speech, you do not necessarily agree with the decision. I wish to point out that whether the referendum, a first in Canadian political history, was a most appropriate method to decide the fate of the accord, (after the accord had failed) it provided a good barometer reading of the positions of the population and of the many regions on this constitutional accord.

Another major intervention by Mr. Mulroney, I remember, was with the final form of the accord (the consensus report). I cannot remember the details of the points by now, and would have difficulty finding the old media coverage stories on it (The Vancouver Sun newspaper had a long article on this during that time). The thrust of the story was that the accord draft in its pre-final form was completed by you after committee discussions and several rounds of inter-provincial negotiations. At the time Mr. Mulroney was busy with other governmental affairs and went on a foreign trip near the end. When he returned, he was displeased with some aspects of the accord and made several changes before taking it to the last round of negotiation with the premiers.

What were the main changes made by Mr. Mulroney at that time? I seem to remember things about the senate (natural resources?) and about manpower control

for Quebec, in particular. If one compares the two versions, that of yours at the time and the one after Mr. Mulroney's changes, would it be possible for one to say that the changes actually reduced the final accord's chances of passage in Quebec and in the western provinces? I also seem to remember that the changes might have met with some resistance from some of the premiers, in particular from then Premier Robert Bourassa of Quebec. How would one venture to guess the chances of national passage for an accord based on your earlier version, though?

d) Distinct Society, Aboriginal self-government, and ethnic minority cultures:

The French people of Canada, being one of the two European groups to first settle in the land that is now Canada, and the aboriginal people who by most historical accounts were the first to inhabit this land and were the inhibitors when the Europeans came, are certainly unique in their (powerful) positions in the Canadian society. But they are not unique in their desires to integrate with the rest of the Canadians but at the same time to preserve their native languages and cultures. Should the constitution address these issues for the other ethnic groups in a more definitive manner, beyond the ethnic minority rights in the charter? Would something like the Canadian Mosaic thinking be a good thing in formal language in the constitution? The Canadian constitutional experiments are interesting in an international sense as they may provide valuable lessons and precedence to a big part of the world.