

The weekend was packed full of history, MP Turner says

Garth Turner
MP

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PROGRESSIVE
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Where do I start? And what can I say?

There was more history packed into last weekend than anyone could have imagined. Our country changed. Our future is unclear.

In Ottawa, the prime minister addressed the nation and appealed for time to heal after our constitutional crisis finally arrived. In Calgary, 5,000 Liberals elected Jean Chretien as leader - a Quebecer who believes every university graduate in Canada should be bilingual. In Quebec City that night, on the Plains of Abraham, 50,000 people came together to celebrate a new future for Quebec.

I am writing this on Saint Jean Baptist day - considered to be a "national" holiday in Quebec. I am writing this in Ottawa, and in a few hours across the river there will be thousands of people holding high the fleur de lis.

Next Sunday I will be in Glen Williams and Caledon and elsewhere in our riding, helping to raise Canadian flags and to celebrate Canada Day.

As a federal Member of Parliament, I have been consumed by these events. Trying to understand what it means; why they have happened; what comes next; and what it will come to mean in our own communities and our own lives.

Right now, I'm confused. The emotional low spot came for me last Friday, when I flew back from giving a speech to a group of Toronto financiers, to watch Meech Lake die before me on the TV set. It was not easy to sit and

watch provinces fight each other, and the feds, and the French.

But it happened. Now I'm sad for Canada, but somehow I feel we may be on the verge of something better - something which makes more sense.

Canada as we knew it may be gone. This will be hard to swallow for those who wanted to hang onto the Canada they were familiar with. But the old Canada died on June 23. The new one was born in the streets of Montreal the next day. It will be born in Glen Williams, Caledon, Bolton and Georgetown this coming Sunday.

The old Canada was crippled with endless constitutional wrangling. It was hung up on the 30-year-old concept of bilingualism. It was a Canada of 10 provinces, with tiny Prince Edward Island holding the power to veto something huge Ontario or Quebec wanted.

Maybe in the new Canada it will be okay for Quebecers to be French and for us to be English - partners, instead of shoving each other's language down each other's throats.

Maybe in the new Canada we will find the freedom to be ourselves - maybe even relish a little in some of English Canada's proud traditions. Maybe the new Canada will not be 10 provinces of wildly differing sizes. Perhaps the new Canada could be redrawn along the regional lines that we - as Canadians - tend to use to describe ourselves. The Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, The Prairies and B.C.

The new Canada may also address the problem of our aboriginal people. The Meech Lake episode, after all, brought that reality crashing into our neat, white, anglo-saxon lives.

There on national television, was Manitoba MLA Elijah Harper - one man holding one eagle feather and blocked and entire nation's constitution. Maybe Harper was a symbol of why the old Canada has to be rethought. Maybe the feather

he held for spiritual strength, brushed away some dust from our national soul.

Meech Lake may have been a spat in our house - an argument so entrenched that the only solution was to set up separate bedrooms.

Maybe, as Canada Day is celebrated in Quebec, Saint Jean Baptist Day should be celebrated in English Canada. Perhaps the new nationalism will be simple realism - recognizing and celebrating the fact that we are different, and equal and still proud of the same country.

Meech Lake was tough. Maybe it was a mistake. And maybe the best thing that can happen to us is to have the politicians go away this summer and let the people think about the kind of Canada they want.

New member welcomed



Auxiliary Notes

FLO CARSWELL
Branch 120

Thursday, June 21 was the last general meeting until September. At the beginning of the meeting the auxiliary welcomed Anne Lawson as a new initiated member of the ladies auxiliary.

Our sick chairman reported that Jess Bunton was now home after a lengthy stay in Georgetown Hospital. Everyone wishes her a healthy road ahead.

Friday, June 22, the ladies auxiliary were the recipients of an excellent steak dinner held by the branch. Later they were entertained with songs from memory lane

by Ray Clark and Jean Rocher. Special thanks to all branch members who cooked and served, making the night a success and a night to remember to everyone.

The highlight of the night was one in which ladies auxiliary president Sheila Hicks and second vice president Liz McNeilly were delighted to perform one of their first duties as newly-elected officers. On behalf of all members of the ladies auxiliary, president Sheila Hicks and second vice president Liz McNeilly presented branch president Hank Russell with a cheque for \$5,000. Hank Russell thanks all members of the ladies auxiliary for their hard work and support.

We would like to welcome Hank and Mary Russell home after attending a Legion convention in B.C. We hear they had a great time.

Wendi Goodhew, P.R.O.

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