

Quebec. That is a fact and cannot be denied. We have been thrown away and here we are trying now to set a political basis out of that.

The second thing I would like to say to the Reform Party is that I hear the leader of the Reform Party proposing a new federalism. I have absolutely no doubt it would be a worse federalism, if it can be, when he begins his proposal by establishing that everything will be based on the equality of the provinces which is what Quebec has fought against for the last 30 years.

All Quebec premiers, starting with Jean Lesage, one of the greatest political leaders of Quebec, always fought against the equality principle. The Reform Party is now proposing a new federalism where a new principle will be enshrined in the Constitution: equality of the provinces. Let me say that even if I were still a federalist I would never accept the fact that this new federalism would exclude official bilingualism.

Any reform proposed by the Reform Party on this basis will not fly. There is no reform possible. There is no possible reform in the country. The decision by Quebecers will have to be made either to accept the status quo, which is stagnation and everything we have tried to get away from for the last 30 years, or a new noble project to build a real country in Quebec so as to allow people in the rest of Canada to have their own country, a country belonging to their minds and hearts.

I do not believe for one minute that there is not a strong national cement binding all English speaking Canadians outside Quebec. In the House I can hear the emotion and I can see that those people have a genuine passion for their country, as I have for mine.

The Speaker: It is noted that the Reform Party will now be splitting its time so the speakers will have 10 minutes and 5 minutes for questions and answers.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to give my most important speech to date of this 35th Parliament. It reflects my personal point of view, not as a representative of any race or of any province, but as a proud immigrant Canadian citizen. It is not directed to the politicians in the House but rather to the people of Canada from sea to sea, the voters who entrust us to work in their best interests.

I will endeavour to treat today's motion in the following way. First I will make my position on Quebec separation quite clear and unequivocal. Second, I will discuss some of the consequences of Quebec separation and then re-emphasize a new vision of Canada as an alternative to separation as earlier presented by our leader, the member for Calgary Southwest.

I humbly realize my opinions and comments on this very important topic may not make a difference in the larger picture. Nevertheless I believe all politicians and Canadians who want Quebecers to remain in Canada need to reinforce their convictions, attack the myths, present the reality and the real face of this great country.

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I want Quebec in as I want Alberta in: as part of the great Canadian federation that has served us all so well. It does not make any sense whatsoever to break up after 127 years, especially in a period of high deficits and debt. Together all parts of Canada are stronger. The proof of that is our enviable record of war participation, political stability, prosperity and freedom. If it is worth dying for, it is worth debating for.

To be unable to work together as Canadians to reach an accommodation quite frankly is unthinkable to me. To continue this uncertainty is already straining our economic, social and cultural diversity and the world is watching.

•(1150)

I respect the convention that federal politicians should stay out of provincial elections. I respect the rights of Quebecers to send the Bloc Quebecois to Ottawa. I respect their right to a referendum on separation, but because this affects me directly I feel I have the right to speak out on this issue.

I respect the leader of the Bloc Quebecois and the many members I have worked with on committees and recently on the basketball court, but I truly regret the course they have chosen. The leader of the Bloc Quebecois is intelligent, charismatic and experienced in trying to get the best deal for Quebec that he can. However I fundamentally disagree and stand against the method he has chosen: separatism over a new federalism.

The reality of the consequences of Quebec's separation would in many ways be very costly for all Canadians. I have evaluated this as a businessman with 25 years of experience. To assume entitlement to all existing benefits of the federation by separating is not only dangerous but very naive.

We have no buy-sell agreement in place to handle separation, no terms of reference that were agreed to while we were friendly partners to facilitate the secession of a province. Neither the British North America Act nor the Constitution Act, 1982, defines an orderly breakup of our great country.

In the face of this fact the reality is that all the many views put forth by the separatist forces in the absence of precedent are in many cases inaccurate projections about the way things will be in a sovereign and separate Quebec. All Canadians should make an honest assessment of the pending separation issue and ask themselves if the risk of separation leads to a more predictable future as compared to working together to create a new and better federalism.

Let me raise a few of the questions about separation that are on the minds of Canadians. Who will negotiate this separation? Will we need a federal election to decide? While we fight over the right to break up the country our fragile economy will suffer. Is this what we really want? Our deficit and debt are so high, how can a new nation start off with such a high debt load and what share will it take? What about the value of the dollar and Canadian interest rates? Will Quebec pay? Will creditors refinance two separate entities so deeply indebted? I, for one, fret over making this assumption. The currency issue places Que-