

The Address

The hon. member was talking about eight commissions, the hon. member for Laval on the government side wishes for the return of a kind of Réal Giguère with *Parle, parle, jase, jase*, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, who has seen quite a few commissions in his life, there have been eight of them, said we are going to have a ninth one, and probably a few others. I listened to Clyde Wells this morning and I seldom agree with him, but this morning he said: even if there were 20 other committees, this is not a matter of process, it is a problem of substance. And when one considers the proposals which have been made, whether it be a referendum or a constituent assembly, in the final analysis the basic problem confronting us is that we hold diametrically opposed views. We have seen today his leader make a very centralizing speech, worthy of the good years, but we listened this morning for example, to the leader of the Liberal party we heard him say: as for the environment, we are going to set the standards in Ottawa, and the provinces will appoint their inspectors; in the field of education, we are going to set the standards in Ottawa and the provinces will see to the rest. In other words, Ottawa runs everything and the provinces pay for it and end up doing all the work.

We know that no political party in Quebec can realistically agree with this kind of federalism. And I know the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier is aware that only the *Equality Party* could perhaps agree with his leader's thinking. But when we look at a report like the Allaire Report, when we look realistically at the facts, does the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier think that the new committee which has just been announced is going to settle the fundamental issues, or whether we are going to be cheated again in the process? It is my opinion and it has been our view from the start that the English Canada will never come up with an acceptable offer by 1992. Ultimately, the train has already left the station and, unfortunately for English Canada, instead of carrying on with the process, perhaps it should focus on the substance of things.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I must tell him that, quite frankly, as far as I am concerned, if there was ever a time when any shape or form

of partisanship should be set aside, it is when the unity of my country is at stake. I believe that no government, no politician and no individual has the right to roll the dice with the future of Canada. I appreciate that my colleague is a member of a caucus which is against both the Canadian duality and, more likely than not, the kind of regionalism I described. However, this is not a dialogue of the deaf. We simply disagree on the basic premise. So, we cannot come to an agreement. Explain as I may—*ad vitam eternam* and *ad nauseam*, if you prefer—Mr. Speaker, my view of this country of mine, of Canada, I will never make him understand because he has his own view and there is nothing I can do about that.

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier who has a reputation for perceptiveness in many fields in this House. He raised the question of the referendum. I would like him to expand on this question of great interest to me, as I am sure most of my colleagues would like him to do, considering his long experience. What would be, in his opinion, the criteria or prerequisites for a referendum to be a true expression of the will of the Canadian people?

M. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of referendum I have a lot of reservations, as for that matter some colleagues like the hon. member for Saint-Denis would tell you, in 1981–1982 we went through the same experience.

I agree that the instrument or process might be acceptable. And with my leader when he announced it, I expressed publicly some opinions about it. The four requirements which in my opinion should be met or otherwise satisfied would be as follows: That the referendum question be clear and precise; second, that it should be supported by all three political parties in this House; that it does not reduce at all the rights of the minority; and that it be subject to the simple majority of the country and, on top of that, to regional plurality where each region would have a right of veto: Quebec, Ontario, the Maritimes and the West. With these four conditions, Mr. Speaker, I think that should a referendum be held, it could be seen as equitable.

Mr. Prud'homme: You might win the member for Saint-Denis with this.