

not intended as a contest between those who believe in dividing Canada and those who believe in a united Canada. The referendum relates to an appreciation of what it means to be a Canadian. You are either proud to be a Canadian or you are not. You either love Canada or you do not. No one can be obliged to do either.

What is the use of this kind of talk from a Government except to imply that such intolerance may just be permissible at this juncture? Indeed, how does this kind of talk differ from that of those in Quebec who would argue today over who is or is not "pur laine"? How far are we already from the demagoguery that is the plague of the referendum technique?

Look carefully at the question the government wants to put in its referendum. Leave aside the manipulative purpose behind the word "renewed." On its face, the question does not seek the ratification of an entente but rather approval of a document as a basis for negotiation. It does not say, "Do you approve of the agreement of August 28, 1992," but rather, "Do you agree that the Consensus Report can be the basis of an agreement?"—an agreement, moreover, it says, for the "renewal" of the Constitution of Canada.

Along the way, it lets Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bourassa claim small victories, wiggle out of uncomfortable undertakings, and reset the agendas of their governments. It would be imprudent to block these escapes. Further failures by Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bourassa at this juncture would only add to our problems.

I regard the distinction between approval of an agreement and approval of a basis for agreement as vital. What we have is not an agreement. It could be the basis for an agreement, and thus the importance of what happens after the referendum is won. What is terribly important is that a "yes" to the referendum question not be translatable into a blank cheque for further constitutional adventures, much less that this government be enabled to ram down our throats its version of what implementation of the Consensus Report should be. That is going to require a great deal of further discussion.

The question as it is written is comparatively innocuous, but there are great dangers in what governments are leading, and the media are accustomizing, people to read into it: That it is an entente. Where? That it will solve our constitutional problems. How? That it will end constitutional demands and threats? With what shared vision, what common purpose, what mutual respect? Certainly not anything that is in the final document as it now stands.

In other words, at this critical moment in our affairs, we must realize that while we are all sick to death of the constitutional debate, it is not over no matter what we do. There is no magic out there. No one on the political scene today seems to have a view of the country that can bring on that widespread self-confidence that is the only real source of unity, the only way of tapping the vast resources of energy and enthusiasm so many of us feel but somehow are unable to let loose for our country.

We have to keep trying. Somewhere down the road we will find the better times and the better leaders to do the better things. For the moment, what matters is not just to work for beneficial results on October 26, but also vigilantly to keep a careful discipline on the claims made for dealing with the results afterwards.

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn: Honourable senators, I want to speak in favour of this motion which would permit Canadians to vote in a referendum October 26 on the Consensus Report on the Constitution which was reached in Charlottetown, August 28, between the Prime Minister, the ten provincial premiers, the two territorial leaders and the leaders of the four main Aboriginal organizations in this country.

Indeed, a referendum has been on the constitutional agenda of the Liberal party for over a decade, and particularly in the proposals set out by Mr. Chrétien over the last two years, so that all Canadians could cast a vote on changes to the fundamental document of Confederation. Only now has this government been convinced of the viability of the referendum as an instrument to be used nation-wide, and this is a welcome conversion.

I was also pleased to hear Constitutional Affairs Minister Joe Clark say last week that the referendum must be supported by a majority in each province in order for this deal to move ahead.

This referendum vote, risky though it may be, will clarify in our minds what the people in this country think and not what the politicians or the journalists say the people think. Certainly we have differences of opinion and levels of frustration. Our diverse population, our geography, our scattered resources, even our weather, make that inevitable, but those differences are a far cry from a desire to divide our country.

Canadians in weeks ahead will hear reasoned and passionate speeches on both sides of the referendum question. They will also, given the time and opportunity, be able to read the Charlottetown agreement. Our responsibility as legislators is to do the same. We must tell Canadians what we think about it. We must ask the questions we think are necessary of those who finalized the deal. Canadians will be listening for those answers.

The document forming the basis of the referendum question is complicated and the changes it proposes are major. They include an elected Senate, which I will discuss in a moment because we are the Senate and are all acutely interested in that part of the agreement. At long last there is recognition of the inherent right of Aboriginal self-government within Canada, an historic move forward for our first citizens, and one which has been a major objective of my party for the last several years.

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There is recognition of Quebec's distinct society as defined by the reality of its French-speaking majority, its unique culture and its civil law tradition. The objectives of a social Charter and an economic union will be enshrined in the Constitution, while at the same time there is failure to move ahead on