

acceptable as a basis for constitutional change. The Leader of the Opposition, Senator Castonguay and others responded eloquently in the affirmative. I do not disagree with Senator Stewart of Antigonish Guysborough that there are dangers to a referendum, but his lack of enthusiasm for this referendum puts him in a minority in Parliament. More important, I think the criticisms he made and the faults he finds in the proposed referendum could be attributed to any referendum that I can think of.

Senator Grafstein on Friday, and Senator Kenny this afternoon, set out some of the many criteria by which they would judge a constitutional proposal. There was everything in it from enriching our nation's culture, in the case of Senator Grafstein, to making our neighbourhoods safer, in the case of Senator Kenny. I think they expect too much of a constitution. I think they expect too much of a constitutional agreement trying to resolve some of the outstanding issues that have been before this country for many years. Neither this agreement nor any constitution will solve all the problems of the world or even of the country for all time.

• (1900)

Honourable senators, just in parenthesis, because I referred to Senator Stewart a few moments ago, I believe he was—unintentionally I am sure—unfair in his reference to Senator Castonguay when he said that our colleague had ducked the question as to the effect of a negative vote in Quebec in this referendum.

Senator Castonguay dealt with that question, I thought, very directly. I will read the essence of what he said last night in answer to the question. As reported at page 2006 of *Hansard*, he stated:

Of course, if Quebecers were to vote against this agreement, I think . . . that the rest of Canada would react very negatively because I believe that a sincere effort was made by all concerned in the agreement before us to reach compromises that seem, if not always fully satisfactory, at least reasonable.

So, if I am right, this negative reaction would prevent further negotiations as well as a simple return to the status quo. I fail to see how a government could start such a process all over.

It seems to me that Canadians from other provinces who are not concerned only with the Quebec issue may also want to move on and make headway on other aspects of this agreement. They could not wait forever for Quebec's OK.

Senator Castonguay concluded by stating:

Without speculating about various more or less negative scenarios, I think we can at least draw the conclusion that a simple return to status quo would be impossible, that we would go through very hard times and that, for those who would support Quebec's independence, it

[Senator Murray.]

would be a major step in that direction and almost an irreversible one.

I find that statement quite unreserved and unequivocal.

**Senator Stewart:** Honourable senators, I think it is only fair to Senator Castonguay that I should say a word on two on this, if Senator Murray will permit me.

What Senator Castonguay dealt with in his response to Senator Molgat's question, as we can see from what Senator Murray has just read, is the result in the rest of Canada if there is a negative vote in Quebec. What I meant when I said that he had "ducked the question" was the consequences in Quebec if this referendum elicits a strong negative vote in Quebec?

**Senator Murray:** It is there in the last paragraph.

**Senator Cogger:** An almost irreversible step.

**Senator Stewart:** Perhaps this is an unfair question to Senator Murray, but is Senator Castonguay saying that if Quebec votes negatively, the result will be that Quebec then will move on to independence? If that is what he meant then I withdraw the word "ducked".

**Senator Murray:** Well, I do not think I should interpret, and I do not think I can improve on Senator Castonguay's own words. He said:

I think we can at least draw the conclusion that a simple return to status quo would be impossible, that we would go through very hard times —

I am quoting from the English version of something that I believe he stated in French, but I am sure that the English version is accurate.

— and that, for those who support Quebec's independence, it would be a major step in that direction and almost an irreversible one.

Honourable senators, Senator Stewart in his remarks also, I regret to say, regurgitated some of the media speculation that we saw in July and August as to the purpose of a national referendum, and indeed what the motives of the Prime Minister and the government might be.

We have never made any secret about it. All of us who were involved in the discussion on the referendum bill in June made it clear that there were a number of circumstances in which a national referendum would be advisable. It was possible that the government would decide that we needed a national referendum to break a deadlock. It was possible, in the best case scenario, that we would need a national referendum to ratify an agreement and, as I think I said in the question period if not in debate, while a referendum is not part of our amending process, using it to ratify a political agreement among first ministers could serve to expedite the formal ratification process.

The Prime Minister and Mr. Clark were unequivocal that a negotiated agreement was always our ideal. It was always our