

every day we could follow the discussions almost exactly as they unfolded. What makes the situation even more difficult is that the media, which are always looking for newsworthy incidents, tend to report on the progress of negotiations as though this were a game with points to be won or lost. If someone agrees to change his position on a matter he is perceived as the loser, and the person who convinced him as the winner.

How a constitution should be interpreted is also important. I am not a constitutional expert, of course, which is why I prefer to quote those who are more knowledgeable.

Only last week, Philippe de Grandpré, who not long ago was still a judge on the Supreme Court, recalled that a constitution should be interpreted openly, constructively and affirmatively.

After all, we are talking about an agreement made by the citizens of a country to establish the kind of relationship they will have in the future, and such relationships must be as affirmative as possible. It is only reasonable that the Constitution should be considered from this perspective rather than one that is limited and reflects extreme distrust.

I was listening earlier to my colleague who spoke a few minutes ago and who asked a number of questions about aspects which, though important, are subordinate to the overall picture.

I hope that in the days and weeks to come she will consider as she said she would, this particular aspect of the Constitution. In other words, that we should take a positive approach to such documents.

Before saying no to this agreement, we should remember there are other matters to consider as well.

First of all, we live in a world of global markets, where it is becoming increasingly difficult to remain economically competitive. We live in a world where every field of activity is feeling the pressure of competition. There is no escape!

In this regard, it seems to me that we are especially vulnerable to our American neighbours. The penalties they have imposed on our exports, to judge by what happened later on, have most often been quite arbitrary. This is a constant reminder of our vulnerability faced with such an economically powerful neighbour, but we are also vulnerable to the outside world. We have had a striking example of this in recent months during the GATT negotiations, especially in the field of agriculture, and this is but one example of our vulnerability to the outside world.

In this context, it seems to me that, whatever our province of origin, whatever our past history in relation with constitutional agreements, we should all of us Canadians remain united.

We cannot afford to speak with separate voices and try to compete and keep up our position in a world where the blocks are becoming increasingly powerful and where economic interests are more and more demanding.

In this economic context, we cannot forget either that a great number of our fellow citizens are unemployed and that the future is especially bleak for our youth. I believe that we cannot afford to discuss the issue of constitutional renewal indefinitely. We shall have to meet enormous challenges in the near future. It is more than time for us to put all our energies in discussing these extremely important issues for our future and for the future of young Canadians.

We cannot afford to allow the present climate of uncertainty which now weighs down our economy to subsist. Many investment decisions have been deferred for months and even years. This climate does not affect only investors, but also the behaviour of our fellow citizens. It is now clear that economic recovery depends not only on the investment decisions of businessmen or on the decisions of our governments, but also on the attitudes of ordinary citizens and the climate among the general population.

Therefore, before rejecting this agreement, it seems to me that we must be aware of its context and not look in detail into only some of its aspects.

Before thinking seriously of rejecting this agreement, we must also consider some other negative effects which could only, in my opinion, result from this rejection. Abroad, the rejection of this agreement could be interpreted as a sign that Canada is no longer able to deal with its internal problems. I think this would be the worst thing that could happen to Canada's reputation and prestige at the international level. Fortunately, even if we are being watched closely and nervously, as we know, our reputation abroad is yet excellent. Before rejecting an agreement like this one, I believe we must consider this.

The rejection of the agreement could only have negative effects on the market. At this stage, and in the present context nobody can predict what the consequences could be. Everyday, we see what is happening in Europe, particularly with regards to the simple possibility of France saying no to the Maastricht treaty. All European countries will be affected.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: The time of Senator Castonguay is up. Will all senators, let the senator continue?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Senator Castonguay: We see that a "no" from France would virtually have a domino effect, not only on European countries, but even here in Canada. So, who can predict the consequences of a negative answer to the referendum of October 26? I for one am convinced that those who say that those consequences would be almost nil see what is going on everyday, right before our eyes.

If the rest of Canada, if a significant percentage of our fellow citizens in the other provinces were to give a negative response, for many Quebecers this would indicate that for whatever reasons, the rest of Canada is incapable of responding satisfactorily to the aspirations of Quebecers.

We must not forget that in 1982, when the Constitution was patriated and the Charter of Rights was entrenched, Quebec,