

## [Translation]

I want to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on a statement he made at page 1978, where he said: If we are prepared to support the Charlottetown political agreement in spite of our great misgivings, it is to a large extent because it meets some of Quebec's legitimate aspirations and duties; He went on to add further on:

Our party is of the same opinion. It sees Charlottetown II, in spite of its serious shortcomings, as a major step in the evolution of the historical agreement that allows Quebec and the rest of Canada to develop and prosper in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

I must say I would have been delighted to hear a similar statement from the honourable senator during the debate on Meech Lake, an agreement in which neither he nor his colleagues, could find any thing to their liking.

● (1850)

## [English]

Honourable senators, the Leader of the Opposition is right in insisting that those campaigning for the "yes" side in this referendum must address the concerns that have been and will be expressed about the Charlottetown agreement. He is right also, I believe, to insist that the "no" side also explain themselves and their alternatives. At page 1975 of *Hansard* he goes on to say:

... I find myself comfortable supporting the question and a "yes" answer to it. I am comfortable asking the Canadian people to say "yes" to the agreement as a basis for an amendment to the Constitution, thereby recognizing the considerable political achievement of Charlottetown and the work leading up to agreement on even a "basis" for amendment...

I do not disagree with his description of this agreement as being a basis for amendments to the Constitution, nor does the government disagree. Essentially, I cannot disagree with the point that Senator Pitfield has made in that respect. Senator Frith goes on to enumerate some of the areas where details still have to be agreed to, and nobody has tried to pretend otherwise or to mislead the Canadian people by pretending that this is an agreement arrived at in such detail that nothing more needs to be discussed or negotiated.

Senator Kirby, in his speech on Friday, asked what constitutes passage of this referendum. The honourable senator knows, as we all know, that its result will not be legally binding on governments, but the political reality is that if this referendum is defeated in even one province the least that can be said is that those amendments requiring the consent of ten provinces would be in trouble and, therefore, perhaps the whole package would be in jeopardy. It would be—and I think Senator MacEachen and I had a discussion about this at the time of passage of the referendum bill—a brave premier who went ahead with legislative ratification of the Charlottetown agreement over the expressed opposition of his population in a referendum.

Those of us who support the "yes" side will have to concentrate first on getting the vote out. There are honourable senators in this place who know that business and who understand how important and how difficult it is. We have to imbue Canadians with a sense of the importance of this referendum for the future of the country. Second—and this is all work of the same kind as we have at election time, except that this is not a partisan issue—is the matter of mobilization, organization and motivation of voters. We have to motivate them to vote "yes". We have to make every effort to get every last voter that we can encourage to come to the poll and support this agreement as a basis for constitutional amendment. There will be time afterwards to analyze the vote by region, language and all the various demographic factors.

We will be asking them, as the Leader of the Opposition has correctly stated, to vote for a set of principles. Yes, Senator Pitfield, some elements of this agreement require a little and some other elements require a great deal of refinement and definition. The rules of the new Senate, as a number of you have pointed out, will have to be agreed to. The powers and financing of Aboriginal governments will have to be negotiated and agreed to, an infinitely complex matter; but isn't the entrenchment of an Aboriginal right to self-government in the terms agreed to in the Charlottetown consensus a step well worth taking, an historic step for this country? I say, "Yes". The agreement for those provinces that want the federal government to withdraw from certain areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction will have to be arrived at. So there will be much negotiation, debate and disagreement.

I hope also there will be goodwill and flexibility, for we are embarked on a process which I do not deny, and no one denies, will be lengthy. It is a process that will take time and a great deal of goodwill to succeed.

I make these points about the essence of the question that is being put to the Canadian people—we are asking them to vote on a set of principles—because I believe that there is a danger that if the example set by some honourable senators in this debate were followed, this agreement would be "nickled and dimed" to death before it had a chance to go anywhere. I think in particular of some of the comments, and I will refer to some of them later, that have been made by Senators Grafstein, Austin, Wood and even Senator Pitfield.

To those honourable senators on the opposition side, if they are not persuaded by anything that I or my colleagues on this side have said, I commend to them and ask that they reflect on the speeches that have been made not only by their own national leader, Mr. Chrétien, but the Leader of the Opposition here and the speeches we heard last night from Senator Gigantès, Senator Stanbury and today from, among others, Senator Fairbairn, Senator Thériault and Senator Robichaud. These speeches, it seemed to me, had a sense of historical perspective, of political reality and considerable sensitivity to the opportunity that our country must grasp now.

Again, we are talking about a set of principles and the question I ask is whether those principles are clear enough to allow Canadians to make an informed judgment on whether they are