

[English]

Nevertheless, I should like to take a few minutes to express my feelings about this deal. I am saddened about what will happen in the future as a result of this week, although it is part of the political life of our party system that caucus decides, and those of us who have lived with caucuses for a number of years know what it means not only to the caucus but to the party and to the parliamentary system.

The leadership of the Liberal Party in the Senate made a commitment back in July or August that it would not pass this bill until there was an election. In hindsight, we might have been more specific and said unless a majority of the people in Canada voted for free trade, but we did not do that. I come from a small province in Canada where 35 per cent of the population is French speaking and the balance is English speaking, and in my province this deal was debated at length. Of course, the Leader of the Government in the Senate and the Prime Minister have always said that the deal had the support of eight premiers, but it makes you wonder, when, in spite of a very popular Liberal premier supporting free trade in my province, over 60 per cent of New Brunswickers voted against the government, primarily because of free trade.

Senator Murray: He was not supporting the government; he was supporting free trade.

Senator Thériault: It gives you an idea of the deep feeling that there is in New Brunswick.

Senator Murray: How did Premier McKenna vote? He was not supporting the government; he was supporting free trade.

Senator Thériault: Anything else?

Senator Perrault: Carry on, Canada!

Senator Thériault: The situation is the same throughout the maritimes—in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P.E.I. During the campaign there was a lot of talk about fear, and I am one of those who fear this agreement. I have risen today to make those remarks because I want my children and grandchildren to know 30 years from now, if things transpire as I think they may, that I stood up and said what I believed. When they ask me, "Where were you?", I am going to have to explain to them that I did not vote against the deal but that I abstained. I am going to abstain, as I did earlier this week, but I do not like doing so, because I am worried.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, we Acadians know what the word "assimilation" means. Thousands of our people went to the United States and what happened to them? Within two generations, they completely lost their mother tongue.

When I see what happened in Canada during the election campaign, I am even more frightened. What regions supported this agreement? Only two Canadian provinces gave majority support to the agreement on November 21, 1988, namely Quebec and Alberta.

The actions of the governments of these provinces do not show that they are totally devoted to Canadian patriotism. That is their right. Most people in Quebec are Quebecers first

[Senator Th]

and then Canadians. We heard talk of separatism from Quebec and Alberta, not from the other provinces. This agreement suits people who think that way.

I conclude by saying that I hope with all my heart that my fears as a Canadian and a parliamentarian will not be realized. Because as you know, within 20 years, as Parizeau said and Bourassa said indirectly, it will be easier to obtain separation or sovereignty-association with the Free Trade Agreement than without it.

Having admitted this, the two main achievements of the Mulroney government are the decentralization of the national government's power to the provinces and the weakening of the Canadian government's power with respect to our southern neighbours.

[English]

Honourable senators, I hope that my fears do not come true. When we talked about social programs during the election campaign as they related to the FTA, I believed everything that was said. The Prime Minister brought his own mother forward to show us that he was not going to take away her pension. I never believed that people of my generation would lose their pensions; but I am concerned about the effect that the agreement will have because of the pressure that was brought to bear by the many companies—God knows how much pressure they used during the campaign—to make sure that the Free Trade Agreement would come about. When they have to compete with the American companies in a different system, over the years it will be the American system that will prevail.

As a Canadian who has travelled throughout the United States and has a lot of respect for the United States, having many cousins who live there, I do not want to see the kind of poverty in Canadian cities that I see when I go to Washington, New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles or any of the other large cities. Thank God it is not like that in Canada. I hope that my fears prove groundless, but I am having a hard time even abstaining and not voting "no" on this deal.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ann Elizabeth Bell: Honourable senators, I should like to make one or two points about Bill C-2, which I assume we are going to give third reading to this afternoon. Bill C-2, which will implement free trade, provides for tariff reductions and the elimination of trade barriers. In that Bill C-2 is implementing the Free Trade Agreement, it has my support and, I assume, the support of most Canadians, because Canadians are free traders; our whole history proves that. However, going beyond the fact that Bill C-2 implements the Free Trade Agreement, it is forcing us into an economic union with the United States, starting with the opening up to the United States of our natural resources, which will be accessible, including energy and water—so far, and allowing direct takeovers of Canadian companies, with no protection for strategic companies.