

replaced with something neutral, such as "changed" or "altered". It is a pity that the authors did not have enough confidence in the substance of their proposal to allow it to be put in a manner that professional pollsters would consider fair and unbiased.

Finally, regarding the date of October 26, it is too soon. There is just not enough opportunity for Canadians to absorb these proposals, to consider how they will work and decide if this proposal will make Canada a better place.

• (1520)

All of this is happening in an atmosphere that has been poisoned by a government that has elevated the debate to a life-and-death struggle for Canada. It is not, except perhaps for politicians who are struggling for power. Canadians know that this is just another constitutional proposal, and they have seen dozens of those and the country has survived.

I get a great feeling of discomfort when I see everyone in this institution lining up on one side in an effort to rush something through, particularly something that was devised only a few weeks ago, of which none of us has yet seen the final text. We are told that this is the best deal that Canada can expect and that anyone who dares oppose it is an enemy of Canada. We are also told that we have to accept this deal because Canadians are fed up with constitutional discussions. We are told that if we do not accept this scheme, Quebec will separate. We are told that without this deal our economy will suffer and the dollar will weaken. If this deal is so good, if it will resolve our constitutional questions for decades, if it will keep Quebec in Canada and if it will strengthen our economy, then surely it can stand a little scrutiny.

Even the text we have now says two quite different things when you compare the English and French versions of paragraph 1(d) of the Canada clause. Is this just a question of "The Gang that Couldn't Shoot Straight", or is the government trying to appear committed to minority language rights in English Canada while soft-peddalling them in French Canada? How well thought through is the substance of the text if the English and French versions of the proposal do not give the same message to Canadians from coast to coast? Why did the government not wait a few weeks so that Canadians could see the final text? Why can we not take a few months so that Parliament, the provincial legislatures and the people can examine how this agreement will affect the lives of Canadians?

Who is measuring the constitutional proposals against the tests that are really on the minds of people, such as: Will this deal do anything to help Canadians find and keep good jobs? Will this deal do anything to improve the education of our kids? How will these proposals enhance our health care system? What is there in this deal that will make our neighbourhood safer? Will these changes do anything to improve the security of older Canadians? How will these proposals make Canada and Canadian industry more efficient at

[Senator Kenny.]

home and more competitive abroad? Will this deal give us a political system that will work, or it will it simply reinforce the differences and divisions within the country?

What I do not like about this process is the sudden rush to judgment. You can surely say that we have been at this for years, but what has really happened? Was the Meech Lake adventure really necessary or was it a clumsy effort that backfired and exacerbated divisions between Quebec and the rest of Canada? People in Quebec were offended because the Prime Minister described a rejection of Meech as a rejection of Quebec. Quebec was not being rejected; a bad deal was being rejected.

After Meech, we were put through a long period of consultations that were substantially ignored. First, the Spicer Commission and then the government's proposals of September 1991, and then the Senate and Commons committee hearings with 3,000 submissions and 700 witnesses. Then we had six national conferences, and then we had the round of meetings from March 12 to July 7, when Joe Clark announced a new deal that could not be substantially changed.

Then, between August 4 and August 28, the Prime Minister chaired four secret meetings and emerged at the end with a completely different deal. Then he had the gall to announce, before anyone could even see a completed text, that opponents of this deal were enemies of Canada. So here we are, less than three weeks later, rushing to approve a referendum question the supporting text of which no one has yet had time to consider.

How is the government handling the process? They are stifling discussion by putting anyone who questions the merits of the proposals into bed with the separatists or the Reform Party. Joe Clark is saying that a decision to oppose the deal is giving in to extremists and playing politics with the future of the country. This is nothing more than a new form of McCarthyism. Do not examine the merits of the proposal, just scare people into silence by telling them they are unCanadian, then ram the referendum question through Parliament and get a decision by October 26—yes or no, all or nothing; this is the only solution that will save Canada.

Honourable senators, this might well be the right thing for Canada, but when do we get a chance to sit down calmly and talk about it? If it is such a good deal, why the scare tactics and the big sell? Will the world come to an end if one more constitutional proposal does not work out?

Canadians are sick of artificial deadlines, all or nothing deals, seamless webs, constitutional roulette. They will not accept bullying cloaked in patriotism, or any deal just to have a deal. They resent the tricky manoeuvring, the loaded wording, the rushed timing of this referendum proposal.

As a Parliamentarian forced to deal with this motion, I take comfort in the fundamental wisdom of Canadians. I have no doubt that on October 26 they will make the right decision in spite of this government's manipulation.