

Every conference needs a leader. In a non-political way, I want to congratulate and thank the Prime Minister of Canada, the Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney. He has been a leader. He is the person who has led over the last number of years in the constitutional debate. I have been there, and I have watched him at work. I have watched people of other political stripes congratulate him on his tenacity, durability, negotiating power, knowledge, and the fact that he is a workaholic when it comes to this kind of negotiation. He exudes confidence and ensures that when others believe that an agreement is moving away, he will pick up on that, call a halt to the proceedings so that new ideas can be discussed, and then go at it again. He has the ability to get things done. I am not the only one to say that; many people in this country have said that. Premier Roy Romanow—who I attended conferences with when he was the Attorney General of Saskatchewan back in the 1980s—called Prime Minister Mulroney a superb negotiator and congratulated him publicly a few weeks ago.

Honourable senators, I also want to congratulate the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark. There is a tenacious fellow. At times, when others would have just said “That is it; enough; let us stop this,” he marched on. He may have grumbled, but he marched. It is due to Joe Clark’s work over the last four months that we are where we are today. He travelled from one end of this country to the other, from British Columbia to Newfoundland, over a four-month period. Every night on television, we would see the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark attending, speaking and commenting on public sessions called to discuss the Constitution. He was a person who gained the admiration and respect of people from one end of this country to the other as he assisted in ensuring that this agreement would be achieved. I salute him. He is a great Canadian, parliamentarian, superb negotiator and leader.

Lastly, the premiers of the provinces and the leaders of our Aboriginal peoples were able to compromise not their principles but their positions, and change their positions when those changes were necessary to ensure that the agreement would be finalized.

The old saying is that a chain is as strong as its weakest link. In Canada, as a result of the work of the premiers, the Prime Minister, and leaders of the Aboriginal groups, we now have a country that is as strong as all of our provinces; and with this agreement, all of our provinces are and will continue to be very strong.

As I have said, these conferences are strenuous affairs. Sometimes politicians can be brought down to earth. I remember at one of these conferences, massive crowds would gather outside the Conference Centre. Joe Ghiz, Clyde Wells and I were coming back to the hotel, having escaped from most of the media. Two gentlemen were standing in front of the hotel. When we walked by they said, “Pardon me, but could we ask you a question?” Clyde Wells, who was very shy and did not want to talk to the press, kept going. Joe Ghiz did not hear them, but I did. I turned and I said, “Yes, what is the question?” I thought they were newsmen. They said, “Well, we are

[Senator Buchanan.]

from the United States, and we heard that Robert Goulet is around here and wondered if you had seen him. We want his autograph.” We were brought back to earth quickly.

Senator Doyle: Did you find Mr. Goulet?

Senator Buchanan: I looked for him but did not find him. I would like to have seen him myself.

The Minister of Health of Nova Scotia and I were taken down to earth once, literally and also in another way. We were travelling by helicopter to a small part of Nova Scotia, a little place called Advocate. I recommend it to you. It is probably the second most picturesque spot in Canada. The first would be the Cabot Trail in Cape Breton, and the second would be the very picturesque drive from Parrsboro through to Advocate and Advocate Harbour. The road now is completely paved all the way around to Amherst.

Hon. John Lynch-Staunton (Deputy Leader of the Government): Do you take reservations, too?

Senator Buchanan: The Minister of Health and I were on our way to Advocate to turn the sod for the new hospital. That was a big day in that area. It was such a wonderful day that the schools were closed for the day so that all of the children could be there to watch the sod-turning. The helicopter hovered over the field, and it pushed all the people away, including the children from the schools.

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The helicopter landed. When the blades stopped rotating there was a rush of kids and they all had their little notebooks, papers and pens. Gerry Sheehy and I were getting out of the helicopter. I was getting a pen out. I noticed they had pens, but I was ready with mine to sign autographs. When we got out one of the kids passed some paper to me. I signed it and he looked at it and said, “Who are you?” Gerry said, “This is the premier.” The kid said, “We don’t want your signature, we want the helicopter pilot’s.”

Honourable senators, I certainly recommend and commend this agreement to the people of Canada, particularly to the people of Nova Scotia. It has been said—and I have heard it in the Senate and outside the Senate—that Canadians may not appreciate the full meaning of the question that has been asked in the referendum because they will not understand the details of the agreement, and, moreover, the legal text has not been worked out. That may be true, but I do not believe it to be so. We have to give Canadians more credit than that. Canadians have been following this constitutional debate for years, and particularly for the past four months. I believe they understand what is going on here. I believe that they appreciate what this debate is all about.

I have heard some people say that the people of Canada will vote “yes” because they want to get the Constitution matter behind them. That is partly true, but I believe they will vote “yes” because it will ensure that this country will stay together; they will vote “yes” to keep the country together, united and strong. They know that this compromise agreement