

I will say right away that I will vote "yes" to Canada without hesitation, without fear and openly wherever people will hear me.

It would really be a lot to ask me to say that this agreement is so good that it is cause for no concern; however, it is no longer the time for us to express our concerns but our certainties.

• (1510)

[English]

There are two aspects of the national referendum of which I feel morally and politically obliged to remind English-speaking senators on both sides of this House. The first deals with the chance that all English-speaking senators on both sides of this institution possess to begin with. Every single one of you can voice openly your qualms and uncertainties concerning some articles, lines, and constitutional divergences without upsetting the fragile balance that confronts Quebecers who, like me, believe in Canada. Your own province may even vote "no" to this accord without risking the breakup of this country. The party to which you belong in this house and in other houses may lose its provincial or even federal election without necessarily breaking up the country.

Each and every province of Canada is endowed with what is termed "Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition". May I remind you, as gravely and as seriously as I can, without any esprit de partisanerie politique qu'au Québec, our government does not have an opposition; it has an option, and that option is "sovereignty". This is our alternative, an alternative that too many English-speaking Canadians do not take seriously enough. When you go into ridings across the land, you can, as you have done here, well criticize the accord. Many of you have done it, and justly so. Yet your criticisms do not endanger the frail equilibrium between a sovereign and a Canadian province. In Quebec, if those of us who believe in Canada begin once again to analyze, scrutinize, assess and evaluate the consequences of this accord, we will only serve—and serve very well at that—Mr. Parizeau and his party and Mr. Bouchard and his party.

Secondly, I wish to touch briefly on an experience I lived during the referendum of 1980. I still bear the scars of that ordeal. In most Canadian homes, members of your families may have different political views on your individual societies, but rarely will you confront yourself with parental feuds. In Quebec, it is already a tragic reality. Sons and daughters are too often against mothers, fathers and grandparents. Friends and neighbours have insulted each other and will again. It has already started. An important sector of our press has already stabbed Mr. Bourassa in the back. He does not deserve the contempt he has so far received from some of your own compatriots and too many of mine. I wrote in *La Presse* in the week of August 24 how appalled I am as a writer and a journalist by what I read and hear in our francophone and anglophone press.

For all these reasons, I hope that many of you in this House, as well as in the other, will think of Quebec with respect and

with a greater understanding and will refrain from repeating how tired you may be with our difficulties, with our nationalism, and our unfortunate intolerance concerning minorities. Again, if you think that Quebec has received too much in this deal, keep in mind the awesome number of Quebecers who believe, and say, that we have received too little. Also keep in mind, whatever your political affiliation may be, the constitutional weight Robert Bourassa has carried on his shoulders for the last two years, whether we approve of the way he has done so or not. He does not only defend his party's policy and his own convictions, but he also defends the continuity of our country. If he loses the referendum, and he might well do so, if the accord is torn apart by criticism, I believe firmly that Canada will lose a part of its soul; and if Quebec breaks away from Canada, it will also lose the other part of its soul.

So at long last, senators, in this present house, I wish that all of us, whatever our reservations about this accord may be, could put the interests of the country before the interests of our respective parties.

[Translation]

As for me, I will tell you again with all the seriousness of which I am capable that my "yes" is without reservation for my country, not because of politics but because of something my father said to me:

I do not want to leave my children a smaller country than I received.

Neither do I! Thank you, honourable senators.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[English]

Hon. Colin Kenny: Honourable senators, the question before us today is this:

Do you agree that the Constitution of Canada should be renewed on the basis of the agreement reached on August 28, 1992? "Yes" or "no".

The resolution really asks us three things: First, do we support the idea of a referendum; second, do we agree with the proposed wording; and third, do we believe that October 26 is the right date?

The beauty of a referendum is that the people decide in a direct way about an issue, and no one can quarrel with that. The difficulty with a referendum is that the process is open to manipulation and is potentially divisive. This is particularly true when the issues involved are complex and the only answer is "yes" or "no". It presumes that there is no other solution than acceptance or rejection of the whole package. The issue is complicated further in this case because the entire debate is and will be highly charged with emotion rather than being a carefully reasoned examination of what is best for Canada.

The next thing we must consider is the wording of the question, and the wording is obviously flawed. There is no doubt that the first three words "do you agree" are leading in a way that will bias results, and the word "renewed" should be