

First, I want to express my concerns. I am concerned about the kind of response the question will get from Canadians and especially from Quebecers.

I am concerned that Senator Murray seems to be making a point of asking each Liberal senator, especially, how he intends to vote on the question and that he is taking notes. This worries me—not because because you are involved, Senator Murray—because I get the impression, and I hope I am mistaken, that there is a plan afoot to gather information to play party politics with the referendum question. I think that is a cause for concern.

Senator Murray should know that one the main reasons why Meech Lake was rejected—or at least he ought to know—was that the Prime Minister said, too soon after Meech Lake, that he rolled the dice.

I hope we do not get into a situation where the government or the Prime Minister or Senator Murray say they will roll the dice.

My second concern as a Francophone is the situation in Quebec. As a Francophone outside Quebec, I think it is very important that my Canada should include Quebec. I think we should remember there are people in this Chamber . . . and that Mr. Bourassa himself is somewhat to blame for a situation that is almost 50/50, according to the experts in Quebec today. The reason why today, Bourassa is faced with a Jean Allaire and Mario Dumont and others is that, as I see it, he went too far. These people are right to doubt his sincerity.

That being said, I support without reservations the question Canadians will be asked on October 26.

I do so as a Francophone outside Quebec and as a Canadian. I do so because I believe that the Association des francophones acadiens and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes reflected the feelings of Francophones outside Quebec in their press release.

Like a lot of other people, I could query all the points raised by those who took part in this debate. I respect the right to raise these points, but I think you could take just about any agreement, just as lawyers could take a legal text and they would be split down the middle on how it should be interpreted.

Because of my background, I have an appreciation of elected representatives at the provincial level as well. When ten first ministers belonging to various political parties with different positions on different issues and with different political philosophies are able to reach a consensus with the Government of Canada, I have to respect that.

There is a tendency among people who have only worked in Ottawa to think that only federal members or members of the federal Cabinet are real Canadians and have the answers to all Canada's problems. That isn't true. Since 1867, Canada has had a system that consists of two levels of government, each with its own responsibilities. Because I worked with a premier for ten years at the provincial level, I believe this premier was

[Senator Thériault.]

just as good a Canadian—and he still is—as any Prime Minister you could see in Ottawa or anywhere else.

I hear my friend Senator Stewart, a parliamentary expert, say he is worried about the fact that there will be 18 more members from Quebec and 18 more from Ontario, but what difference does it make to us in the Maritimes? At the federal level, this country has always been led by Quebec and Ontario, and that is only normal, because they happen to have most of the members. Whether they have 18 more or less is not going to make that much difference. I know a lot of points were raised by my colleagues.

I believe in the new Senate. I say sincerely that if I were 30 years younger and decided on a political career, I would go for the new Senate, because for once, at least in Ottawa, in the central government, in Parliament, I would feel equal with a man or woman from Ontario or Quebec because there would be six senators from New Brunswick, six from Ontario and six from Quebec.

For those who are concerned about the Senate's powers—they may not be all the powers that I would have liked to see—I am convinced that with 62 elected senators, it will not create problems. As an aside, what concerns me is that Quebec is thinking of having its senators elected or appointed by the legislature. I do not believe that will last long, for example, because when the senators from Quebec have served one or two terms here, they will feel the pressure to be elected by the people.

You know, in 1867, almost half the debates on the 1867 accord dealt with the Senate and its powers. At that time, there was an elected legislative council in every province of Canada. The leaders at the 1864 and 1867 conferences opted for an appointed Senate because they thought that an elected Senate or elected legislative bodies had too much power.

Among the quotations that I noted in these discussions, I would mention one by George Brown in 1867 in opposition to the election of senators. He said this:

● (1730)

[English]

. . . It has been said that members of the Upper House ought not to be appointed by the Crown, but should continue to be elected by the people at large. On that question my views have been often expressed. I have always been opposed to a second elective chamber and I am so still, from the conviction that the two elective Houses are inconsistent with the right working of the British parliamentary system . . . [W]hen the elective element becomes supreme, who will venture to affirm that the Council—

—of course, "council" meaning the legislative council that was replaced by the Senate—

— would not claim that power over money bills which this House claims as of right belonging to itself? Could they not justly say that they represent the people as well as we do, and that the control of the purse strings ought,