

*Government Orders*

The question Canadians have to ask themselves is: Do they want a referendum that can be bought or do they want a referendum that can be judged on the merits of the issues? Obviously I support the latter.

There is also the question of what is the role of government in a referendum?

[*Translation*]

This brings me to say a word about the role of the government. We know that this bill allows the government to get all the publicity that it wants. It enables the government to take sides, to use taxpayers money to promote one point of view at the expense of the other.

Of course, if the question only consisted of asking the population whether it likes Canada or not, it would not matter so much. Obviously, all members of the federal parties like Canada.

The question should have to do with the content of the agreement that was reached. The role of the government would then be to give people the information they need to make a decision.

A referendum is a consultation process: You ask people what they think. To be able to make a decision, these people need to hear the arguments supporting the two views.

Do not try to tell people how they should vote. Listen to them. Trust Canadians.

[*English*]

Then we come to the matter of the question and the fact that the framing and timing of that question at this point in this legislation is left solely in the hands of the Prime Minister and the cabinet. In that case, this will be a government referendum.

Let me be honest. I really cannot understand why the government has chosen not to involve in a meaningful way the other federal parties in this House and why the government would not accept in the legislation that a question should be formed in a non-partisan way and that any question posed and discussed in this House should be approved by a majority of 60 per cent in this

House of Commons. Surely that is only reasonable. It is only common sense.

If we are going to be truly non-partisan, let us be non-partisan. Let us have meaningful consultation and co-operation and listen to the suggestions from all sides.

In previous days, I asked the Prime Minister if he would consult the provinces, territories, and aboriginal people as well about the formation of the question and he has rejected that.

Surely, all of us who want this country united, who believe that we have not been sent to this House of Commons to destroy this country, want to ensure there is a fair process to build on success. We want to make sure that we consult with all of the parties involved and make sure that we are going to the people with a question that is real, that is genuine, that is non-partisan.

Then the people of Canada can say: "Yes, I want to vote for that kind of Canada because that is a Canada where politicians work together, where provinces, territories, aboriginal people work together. That is the kind of Canada I want to work for, and that is the kind I want to vote for".

That is the kind of referendum we want to see.

It seems to me the amendments we proposed were common sense. Heaven knows we are going to need all the common sense we can muster in the next few months.

Finally, I want to turn to the issue of how a referendum would be interpreted. All three federal parties in this House have signed reports on where they stand.

They stated that a consultative referendum should be interpreted by a regional or double majority so that no one part of the country could be seen to be left out. I agree with that. When we signed that, when we discussed that issue in those various committees, we were serious about that. We did not just sign that and say: "Oh, well, when it comes to a referendum we will just put that aside".

I know we said that in the report. We said there should be some interpretation. We said parts of the country should be assured they will not be left out but when it