

federal jurisdiction, whether perceived or actual. Maurice Duplessis spoke of provincial autonomy based on a strict interpretation of the BNA Act.

[Translation]

Jean Lesage followed this with "Maître chez nous". Daniel Johnson's slogan was "Equality or independence", and we find much the same sentiments today in the words "distinct society".

My point is that Quebec's priorities, aspirations and well-founded concerns are not brand new, and I think we should remember that today. Whatever the outcome on October 26, Quebec will always be on the alert. And no matter which party happens to be in power, it will always be imperative for that party to protect and promote the vitality of the culture and customs of Quebec society.

[English]

The English version of the question that was asked in 1980 reads as follows:

The government of Quebec has made public its proposal to negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada, based on the equality of nations.

By the way, the word in French is "peuples" and "nations" is certainly not an accurate translation of that.

The question continued as follows:

This agreement would enable Quebec to acquire the exclusive power to make its laws, levy its taxes, and establish relations abroad—in other words, sovereignty—and at the same time, to maintain with Canada an economic association including a common currency. No change in political status resulting from the negotiations will take place without the people's approval at another referendum. On these terms, do you give the Government of Quebec the mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement between Quebec and Canada?

The government at the time chose the option of sovereignty association because the polls convinced it that there was a better chance of winning than if it simply went for sovereignty or independence.

Having read and studied it carefully, I, frankly, could have answered yes to that question, and I said so on more than one occasion. I quickly realized that would have been the wrong thing to do because, each time I expressed my opinion, I was told that I was only encouraging the separatist cause. In other words, the referendum of 1980 quickly turned into a "Canada, are you for it or against it?" exercise, a most deplorable turn of events but, I suppose, inevitable.

Now the question on the Charlottetown agreement threatens to develop into a similar confrontation which, in turn, may well lead to various conflicting interpretations of the result. Is "oui" the same as "yes"? Is "non" the same as "no"?

[Senator Lynch-Staunton.]

I can only hope that those who will be called to lead the debate will resist the temptation to stir up emotions by appealing to patriotic instincts and will, instead, argue the merits of the agreement.

As for the agreement itself, it is not difficult to find flaws in it. It is, after all, the result of a compromise amongst various parties with conflicting approaches and views on a number of key issues.

Of course the agreement is not perfect. Why apologize for that? Who would expect it to be perfect in the first place? Rather than harping on this, Canadians should rejoice in the fact that an agreement was possible, has been arrived at, and has the unanimous support of our federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal leaders—not a mean feat in itself.

There are still many questions to be answered. I have some apprehension regarding the election of senators. We are led to believe that some could be named by provinces and others would be elected. I am uncomfortable with the concept of a double majority. I have difficulty in reconciling two elected houses functioning efficiently in a parliamentary system. I wonder at the meaning of "self-government".

But these and other preoccupations will not dissuade me from voting "yes". The question we are asked to answer refers to a renewed Constitution on the basis—and I emphasize the three words "on the basis"—of the August 28 agreement. I interpret this to mean that, once approval is given, the final text will build on the consensus. No doubt clarifications and even changes will take place along the way, but the main thrust, as expressed in the consensus, and hopefully approved by a majority of Canadians in all provinces, will remain.

The whole history of Canada has been that of daring, of a daring people. Canadians dared to build a country when few would even have tried. The first explorers, the traders, the surveyors, the builders of the railroads, the great waves of immigrants—all was done in a daring way, as more often than not they were going into the unknown with very little but hope.

Canadians dared again in 1867. Once the BNA Act initiated a new relationship between the provinces, things did not go smoothly—far from it. The last 125 years have been marked by a series of changing relationships within the federation, of new definitions, of revised sharing of responsibilities and dividing of jurisdictions, always in an evolutionary sense, for Canadians are a people who profoundly believe in evolution, not revolution.

Now we are called upon to express ourselves collectively on the latest phase of this evolutionary process. Canadians are asked to dare again, to confirm an agreement which, despite its flaws and imperfections, nonetheless represents significant progress in the search for even more harmonious relations between all Canadians.

In voting "yes" on October 26, Canadians will contribute significantly toward this end and the rest of the world will