

It is much more difficult to talk about reason and economy than to talk like a "coach" saying: Those damned people; they hit us so now we have to hit them back. The economic romanticism, not only in Quebec but in every country, is always easier to use as a weapon than to say: Listen, I have done some calculations and the budget does not balance.

It is a lot harder to sell cold hard facts than it is to sell enthusiasm: come on, let's go for it. Shoot first gentlemen; we will die, but we will not surrender. All this is so beautiful. It does not work but it is beautiful. This is part of the 19th century.

Mr. Bourassa must fight against something that will be praised by all the troubadours and media. It is difficult. If we do not understand that and if we vote no, we will destroy it and we will destroy Canada.

I am not a Quebecer with old roots. I am a Quebecer by marriage, if you will; I married a Quebec family. I do not believe that Quebecers, even those who are not very romantic among my relatives, could accept being slapped in the face, because this is the way it will feel to them, twice within five years, by having an accord, signed by all the premiers, torn up twice in five years.

This will trigger a wave of violent and difficult emotions. Unreasonable people take power on both sides of the barricades that are raised following something like a "no" vote.

Some argue that such considerations are at the expense of principles. I should like to come back to the beginning of my speech, where I said that democracy does not work so much on principles. There are indeed some principles, such as respect for the individual, et caetera. But there are also things like how exactly things are managed. On what chair does the deputy minister rest his behind? How much power does he or she have relative to another deputy minister? That is not the kind of thing that make or breaks a nation. It is not a matter of principle, but food for turf wars, as we say in English, and there will always be turf wars. To put an end to these wars, we would have to shoot every high school history teacher on the planet and to do away with deputy ministers, with all due respect to those of you here who have been deputy ministers and who, no doubt, are exceptions to the rule.

I will certainly vote yes. I will militate in favour of the "yes" because there is no other choice. As a Quebecer, I am here to stand up for Quebec. I am deeply convinced that separation, which would be inevitable following a "no" vote either in English Canada or in Quebec, would be catastrophic for my province, the province where I live and plan to keep living, with my children, nephews and nieces whom I love dearly.

It is for their good that I am speaking up. Thank you, honourable senators.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, as usual I will ask my friends opposite. I just want to check whether my friend will vote yes on October 26.

[Senator Gigantès.]

Senator Hébert: I do not have to answer that question.

Senator Gigantès: I do not understand why you are asking me the question, considering I have already said I will. Had I known you were going to ask the question, I would have refrained from telling, just to pester you. I have no right asking that question and it is improper to do so in a democracy. I will make my statements as I see fit. No need to question me.

Senator Hébert: You have asked it often enough. We do not want to hear it any more.

[English]

Hon. John Buchanan: Honourable Senators, I said a few words on this topic on Friday and I do not intend to repeat what I said on that occasion, except to reiterate that from 1978 till 1990 I was very privileged to participate in over 20 federal-provincial conferences, many of them on the Constitution. I was privileged to sign the constitutional accord which came about as a result of the conferences between 1978 and 1982. I was privileged also to sign the 1987 Meech Lake Accord and to then sign a final, 1990 accord in the Conference Centre in June of 1990. I am now privileged again to be able to participate in what may be the final round in constitutional discussions for at least five years or more in this country.

I believe that on October 26th the people of Canada will vote "yes" in the referendum, which will give this country stability as far as the Constitution is concerned for many years, and will probably assist us in lasting at least another 125 years as the great country that we are.

I have only a few words to say about the agreement itself. I believe it is an excellent agreement, for which Canadians will vote "yes". It has many similarities to the Meech Lake Accord, but I believe that it goes further than the Meech Lake Accord. That accord was agreed to by every provincial government and by the Government of Canada but, unfortunately, events in the three-year period after it was signed ensured that it failed.

However, this new agreement, the so-called Charlottetown agreement, will not founder because it will go to a referendum of the people and the people will have the final say in advising the governments on what the will of the people is.

This is a good agreement. As many have said before me, it is not a perfect agreement, but in political life there is never anything that is perfect for everyone. Government is the art of compromise; certainly not compromising principles, but compromising positions and changing positions from time to time in the interests of the country. I believe that this is what this document is all about. I like the title on the fact sheet, "Our Future Together", because that is what this agreement is about.

The Canada clause contains basically the same wording as did Meech Lake. It recognizes Canadian federalism, the rule of law, linguistic duality and Quebec's distinct society.

One of the puzzles of political life in Canada is why some people, even today, question the distinctiveness of Quebec