

consider that Quebec has already exercised self-determination by joining and remaining in Confederation. This is what the Prime minister had in mind when he spoke of Quebec's separation as a "crime against humanity". These are strong words, which can be explained by examining the meaning given in the Renaissance to the word "humanism": it meant the concrete development of human qualities. Federalism represents a form of political humanism through which people unite and grow together. Separation would destroy this humanism.

Perhaps you have been told that Quebec never developed a sense of belonging to Canada and that consequently its initial self-determination was imaginary and that Confederation should be renegotiated as if it were a common commercial agreement. First let me tell you that all the polls conducted in Quebec up to now belie this claim.

If this sense of belonging did not exist, why would the majority of Quebecers regularly express their support for Canadian federalism? Why would they be content to ask for its renewal rather than its demise? Precisely because the majority of Quebecers do not want to burn their bridges and do not want to leave the family. The bond exists and cannot be broken without upsetting the sense of identity and being of the vast majority of people of good will in Quebec as well as the rest of Canada.

To be convinced that most Quebecers are federalists, one need only to refer to the results of polls taken from the sixties up to the present. All of them prove that the percentage of separatists has varied by only one per cent during this period, and that it has levelled off at twenty per cent. There is thus no basis for speaking of irreversible historical trends. In a recent poll taken by the Quebec Institute of Public Opinion, people were asked about the option which is most favourable to the separatists - namely sovereignty-association, which is separation followed by association with the rest of Canada. Only 28.4 per cent of Quebecers were in favour of the idea, while 58.3 per cent were opposed to it.

One often hears that young people are in favour of separation - but what do the findings of the Quebec Institute of Public Opinion indicate? The polls show that 61.9 per cent of young people from 18 to 24 are opposed to sovereignty-association. Moreover, when Quebecers are asked which level of government serves their