

**Senator Argue:** Honourable senators, I suppose had I chosen to adjourn the debate at this point I might be in a position to provide, at a later date, more satisfactory answers to some of the questions Senator Roblin has raised. I am happy to do the best I can—

**Senator Roblin:** Take your time. Adjourn the debate, if you wish.

**Senator Argue:** I could make further inquiries and speak at another time, but I am happy to close the debate now and have the bill progress.

**Senator Flynn:** If it is your intention to have it referred to committee, you can make your replies there.

**Senator Roblin:** Personally, I would like the minister to take his time. If I have asked questions which require a little research, I would be quite happy to wait for his answers.

**Senator Argue:** On that basis, perhaps I should adjourn the debate. I certainly can provide answers to some of the questions at this point. However, on the legal point raised, I am not in a position at this point to provide a legal reply. I imagine that this bill is in the category of many bills that we consider from time to time; namely, that it will be retroactive. But I would be happy to get legal advice on that particular point.

I would also be pleased to determine whether or not the advisory committee had an input when this policy was changed previously and to look into the further question as to whether or not an annual review has been made in the past and, if so, when and what the result was. On that basis, I move the adjournment of the debate.

On motion of Senator Argue, debate adjourned.

### SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

#### MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY—DEBATE CONTINUED

The Senate resumed from yesterday, consideration of His Excellency the Governor General's Speech at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-second Parliament, and the motion of Senator Rousseau, seconded by Senator Hays, for an Address in reply thereto.

**Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay:** Honourable senators, while I have spoken in the Senate on numerous occasions, mainly in response to questions respecting my former portfolio of National Revenue, today I rise to make my first major address in this house. May I say at the outset how honoured I am to be a member of this distinguished body, surrounded by so many of Canada's most eminent statesmen and women.

I have on many occasions spoken words of praise about our most able Speaker, yet I have not until now had an opportunity to make my comments a matter of record. I would therefore now add my words of praise and congratulations to those who have preceded me in this debate.

I should also like at this time to congratulate those three of our number who have been appointed to cabinet. All three are performing tremendously well in their respective portfolios.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Guay:** I also wish to congratulate the mover and seconder of this motion.

I am pleased to be able to serve in this chamber as a representative of St. Boniface, Manitoba. As most historians have related, St. Boniface is the cradle of the west. Lord Selkirk invited Monseigneur Provencher to St. Boniface, and it was from St. Boniface that Canadian explorers and missionaries departed on their discovery of what would become our western Canadian heritage.

The last senator to represent St. Boniface was Senator John Power Howden, whose contribution to the public life of this country spanned some 35 years, 20 of which were spent in the House of Commons and 15 in the Senate. While that in itself was a remarkable achievement, an even greater achievement was to bring me into the world. He was our family doctor in St. Boniface, and he was a tremendous doctor.

Honourable senators, as I look back over my political career I feel a sense of personal achievement. From a modest beginning as an entrepreneurial member of the francophone minority of St. Boniface, I went on to serve my city as mayor and, ultimately, my country as a cabinet minister. I thank my family and friends for their support; I thank my colleagues for their encouragement, and I thank my leader, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister of this country, for his trust. I am both delighted and honoured to be able to continue my service as a member of this esteemed body. My only hope is that I will be able to display the dedication and selflessness of my predecessor.

While I may serve St. Boniface, I also serve, as each of you, regardless of party, serves, all other parts of Canada. Together we represent Canada's rural and urban communities, her various provinces and diverse regions, as well as her minorities, thereby ensuring that each segment of our country has a voice in our nation's capital.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, I would also like to talk today about the attitude of Francophones outside Quebec towards the Quebec referendum. They feel themselves directly concerned by the referendum which will be held in Quebec on May 20. Of course, it is impossible to describe in a few words the attitude of Francophones outside Quebec. However, I believe it necessary to make a few comments about some of the positions which have been taken and which have caused rather strong reactions in certain circles.

First of all, we shall look at the position of the Fédération des Francophones hors-Québec, the FFHQ, in the referendum debate. Then we shall examine the positions taken by the various leaders of provincial francophone associations.

Following a meeting of its various groups held in Montreal on March 29 and 30 to determine its position in the referendum debate, the FFHQ let it be known that it would not support the NO option for the referendum and that it had noted a strong evolution of its members towards the YES option. In a statement published at that time, the FFHQ

explained that while its members are divided as to the possibility of supporting explicitly the YES option for the referendum, it had come to a consensus as to the impossibility of working actively for the NO option. This statement mentioned several reasons to justify this position.

The FFHQ asserted that it did not commit itself to the NO because it recognized that a YES to the referendum question was not a YES for sovereignty association. To support this interpretation, it mentioned the formal promise of the Lévesque government to hold a second referendum. On the other hand, the FFHQ noted that it would be difficult for it to give its unconditional support to the concept of sovereignty association, which it considers for the moment, and I quote:

—insufficiently explicit about the status and the hope of improving the situation of francophone communities outside Quebec.

The FFHQ concluded its statement on its position in the referendum debate by giving the following warning to the provincial authorities, and I quote:

Our provincial governments will have to express clearly their political desire to meet our aspirations before the referendum if they want us to reconsider our position. Otherwise, we shall continue to be a “people without a country”, and we shall have to come down explicitly and unequivocally for a YES to any negotiation which would inevitably result in the formulation of a new agreement based on the principle of equality of the francophone and anglophone nations without any prejudice to the rights of the native people.

The position taken officially by the FFHQ did not prevent some of its member associations from taking their own positions as provincial groups. For instance, the executive of the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta decided to take a position of non-interference in the Quebec referendum to respect the right of Quebecers to determine their own future. On the other hand, the Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario—ACFO—decided to “monitor” most particularly the comments of the Ontario government spokesman about the status of Francophones in this province and to rectify any mistake if need be.

However, it is the decision of the leaders of the provincial associations of Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Manitoba to support the YES option which received the most attention. However, if we look at how these positions have been expressed, we can only recognize that they show the same ambiguities as the position taken by the FFHQ. Finally, it is important to take into account the reactions generated by those supporters of the YES side among the people those provincial associations claim to represent.

I would like to repeat that in those associations it is the leadership, perhaps I should use the word “executive”, but it is the leadership, not the membership of the groups in the provinces. After a lengthy discussion the board of the Association culturelle franco-canadienne of Saskatchewan unanimous-

[Senator Guay.]

ly decided to support the YES side at a meeting held in the month of February. The executive of the association then stated that its support for the YES side in the Quebec referendum should be disassociated from Mr. Ryan's position on the new constitution as well as Mr. Lévesque's sovereignty-association. They said:

So YES for us finally means a chance to get on with the discussion of our rights and our place in confederation in a somewhat more open manner with the prospect of possible changes. Whether you like it or not, and even if that is not what it truly means, a NO in the referendum will be interpreted as satisfaction on the part of Quebecers (and consequently of all French Canadians, they said) with the present situation. English Canada is only waiting for that NO to bury the whole issue as quickly as possible, forget about any serious discussion of Canadian confederation and return to the status quo. So a NO in the referendum could very much mean NO to change. And the absence of change, the status quo, quickly and surely leads to the disappearance of Francophones.

According to the executive of the ACFC of Saskatchewan, the only solution is for Quebecers to support the YES side and hope that the negotiations which will follow will bring considerable changes in the Constitution, thus giving “Fransaskois” certain rights that will enable them to survive. The executive of the association considers that a YES vote does not necessarily mean a mandate for sovereignty-association but a repudiation of the present Constitution.

The position taken by the ACFC is far from being endorsed by all “Fransaskois”. Indeed, during a special program broadcast by the local television station, we were able to see that most Francophones in the Gravelbourg area rejected a YES vote. While wishing for a reform of the Constitution, they expressed their fear about the future if Quebec supported the YES side. Those “Fransaskois” think that in spite of a negative vote in Quebec the degree of dissatisfaction across the country will force governments to renew the Constitution. On the contrary, they are convinced that a positive vote in the referendum would be the first step towards independence of the birth-place of the francophone presence in North America. They do feel that without Quebec everything is loss for them.

The Société des Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick—no I am wrong, I should say the leaders of the Société des Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick because again you cannot blame all Acadians, quite the contrary—announced its decision to support the YES side in the referendum on sovereignty-association even though “the constitutional plan of the Lévesque government does not fully meet the aspirations of Acadians”. The president of that organization stated that a victory of the NO side in the referendum would be interpreted as support for the status quo and that the “status quo leads directly to the assimilation of Francophones and their disappearance sooner or later.”

Mr. LeBlanc also said that Acadians and other Francophones outside Quebec should take part in the negotiations for a new agreement that would meet not only the needs of

Quebecers but also the needs of French-speaking communities outside Quebec. According to him, a positive vote in the referendum represents the only way of getting the process of constitutional revision moving. He stated that the decision of the Société des Acadiens should be interpreted as a message to Canada expressing a desire for change by the Acadians of New Brunswick.

In an editorial in *l'Évangéline*, Mr. Paul-Emile Richard suggested that the Société des Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick is kidding itself if it thinks that the PQ is interested in negotiating a new confederative pact under which official language minorities would get better treatment. The editorialist suggested that the association did not have to get involved in the business of another province. In addition, he said he did not understand why the association felt it had to give its support, no matter how "qualified", to a process that could engulf the Acadians if it were implemented. That analysis led Mr. Richard to wonder whether the association was working in the best interests of Acadians or in the interests of someone else. Finally, in concluding his editorial, he asked whether the "qualified" YES of the association reflected the views of Acadians as a whole.

It was during a press conference held at the cultural centre of St. Boniface on April 1 that the officials of the Société francophone-manitobaine announced that they were supporting the YES side in the Quebec referendum. The president, Mrs. Gilberte Proteau, indicated that it was a YES to a mandate to renegotiate the Constitution and that the association did not take side about the separation of Quebec. Mrs. Proteau explained that the YES was necessary because the present Constitution is economically discriminatory against the country and culturally discriminatory against Francophones.

To recall how the association arrived at its position, it should be said that a motion suggesting a review on the effects of YES or NO in the Quebec referendum, for the Manitoba Francophones had been passed following a close vote on March 23, during the annual convention of the Société franco-manitobaine. According to the newspapers at the time, the deliberations, before the vote by show of hands, had revealed that there were wide differences of opinion among the 750 persons in attendance. Now, on April 1, at the press conference she held, the president of the association stated that it was on the basis of that motion that the executive committee had reached a decision on the stand to be taken, and that the decision had been unanimous.

The position taken by the executive committee provoked strong reactions in various franco-manitoban circles where it is doubted that the position of the committee is that of the majority of the French-speaking population in the province. Those reactions led to the founding of the Pro-Canadian Committee which initiated a petition in favour of a united and bilingual Canada. On April 26, the president of the committee, Mr. Maurice Prince, announced that in two weeks of activity his group had gathered the names of some 3,000 Franco-Manitobans and Francophones living in Manitoba. I congratulate Mr. Prince, because since April 26 he has accomplished a

lot among our Franco-Manitobans. It has become obvious that the vast majority, that is, a high percentage of Franco-Manitobans, would not consider saying YES, because if they had to vote, they would vote NO, as Quebec Francophones will in fact do next Tuesday.

Francophones outside Quebec certainly cannot be blamed for exerting pressures to get the most out of the present confrontation between Quebec and English Canada, and for trying to speed up negotiations for a constitutional reform that would take into account the reality of the two founding peoples. However, one must deplore the fact that the stands taken by some Francophones outside Quebec have given more weight to the argument, appealing but false, according to which a YES in the referendum expresses support for a renewed federation.

Those who claim that voting YES would give renewed impetus towards renewed federalism do not understand, I am sure, that sovereignty is the very denial of federalism.

● (1550)

[English]

I should like to speak briefly on another matter of interest, namely, the decentralization of federal departments and services. The current emphasis on decentralized government in Canada began in 1968. During the election campaign of that year, Mr. Trudeau emphasized the concept of "participatory democracy," which caused major political and bureaucratic interest in making government more sensitive to people's needs. Decentralization of government departments and decision-making from the Ottawa-Hull area to the various regions and provinces across the country was seen as one means of making federal policies and programs more responsive to local needs.

The Western Economic Opportunities Conference held in Calgary in 1973 gave added momentum to federal decentralization policies. At the conference, western premiers complained about Ottawa's continued disregard for regional needs in its policies, and in the way the federal government delivered programs in the west. From a political point of view, many observers believe that the conference was designed to re-win the west for the Liberal Party after its poor showing in the 1972 general election. Decentralization has thus been thought of as one important method of eliminating the feeling of alienation in western Canada.

When the President of the Treasury Board announced the creation of the government task force on decentralization in September 1975, he suggested that decentralization policies would be given "the highest priority". The move from Ottawa to smaller communities across Canada would make the latter more attractive places in which to live, and hence help to offset the concentration of the population into ever fewer metropolitan areas. Decentralization would prevent government from becoming "Big Brother" in future years and thus minimize public alienation.

Mr. Chrétien at that time also stressed the importance of decentralization as a factor in strengthening national unity in western Canada as well as Quebec. He said:

But alienation exists in other parts of Canada, especially in the west. The reason for this is that the federal government appears insensitive and unresponsive, just as it used to seem to Quebecers.

A further objective of the plan to decentralize became apparent as specific moves were announced. In August 1975 the Minister of Supply and Services decided to relocate the 250-man Cheque Redemption Control Division of the department from Ottawa to Matane, Quebec. He explained the choice of Matane in part by the following consideration:

Locating this division in Matane will create 250 permanent jobs in a region where work is very seasonal and where the chronically high unemployment rate has exceeded 30 per cent in winter.

Although only 250 jobs were involved, the annual payroll of about \$2.3 million would supply a much needed boost to a local economy suffering from high unemployment. Decentralization was thus an aspect of the continuing federal effort to reduce regional economic disparities, and to inject jobs and money into depressed communities to prevent their gradual depopulation.

At the same time that the relocations were announced, it was stressed that they would be completed over a long period of time—three to five years—to ensure that they could be carried out in an orderly manner and to minimize the economic impact on the National Capital Region. For this reason, most of the intended moves were either still in progress or had not yet begun when there was a change of government in 1979.

The Canadian public service is still much more highly centralized than either its United States or British counterpart. As much as possible there is still the need to ensure that Canadians from coast to coast have access to the same services and treatment as are available in Ottawa, without having to refer every issue back to the capital, much less visit it. It is only by accelerating the decentralization of the Public Service and by creating strong regional power bases within it that it can be made more responsive and sensitive to the interests and concerns of the whole country.

The problem is particularly acute in the most senior echelons where too many officials have never served in various parts of the country, but have largely built their careers at headquarters in Ottawa. So long as a disproportionate number of the most senior and influential government positions are concentrated in the National Capital Region, the most competent and ambitious of young and middle-ranking public servants

will attempt to be posted here as early as possible in their careers, and will strongly resist any suggestion that they accept a position in the maritimes, Quebec, the west or the north as a blight on their future promotion. The opposite must become the case. Varied service in different regions of the country must become an essential qualification for promotion to the most senior policy and decision-making positions.

Real decision-making power must be decentralized as well as sections of departments if career opportunities are to be created in various parts of the country, and if regional alienation is to be ended. How can local people and the provinces have confidence in the regional offices if the senior managers are seen as little more than post office boxes and messengers for Ottawa? Why indeed should deputy ministers in Ottawa respect the regional input into the national decision-making process if the regional officers have little independent authority and are always subject to having their local and regional decisions overruled from Ottawa?

It is essential that if we are to have decentralization, and let Canadians know that we are providing them with the same service they would obtain in Ottawa, then, whenever a regional manager makes a decision, that decision must not be interfered with by Ottawa.

While the policy of relocating parts of departments and federal agencies to smaller communities across Canada is desirable, I repeat that it should not become an excuse for avoiding the development of strong provincial and regional centres of power within the federal public service. Without such centres, it will be too easy for a practice of "diffuse the physical plant but continue to dominate the individual component from Ottawa" to become the rule. To prevent this from happening, it may be necessary to reorganize departments more along regional lines than is presently the case, or even to combine the activities of several departments at the local level. The Department of Regional Economic Expansion is currently the only one which seems to have substantially decentralized its decision-making process, and to have developed a greater responsiveness to local and provincial needs and priorities as a result. The Employment and Immigration Commission also seems to have moved in this direction, but to a lesser degree.

• (1600)

If decentralization is to become, as it should be, a real factor in the development of national unity, in ending regional alienation and in enhancing the federal presence in all parts of the country, the same must be able to be said of almost all departments and agencies.

On motion of Senator Macdonald, for Senator Tremblay, debate adjourned.

The Senate adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m.