

elected by some provinces and chosen by the executive of other provinces if the current provisions in the Charlottetown agreement are carried through into our constitution. With different qualities for entry, no doubt we will still get a highly competent group of people in this chamber. However, their influence as regional representatives will pale before that of premiers and of other authorities. Their significance in terms of their relationship with the House of Commons will be as perhaps today only in terms of the quality of the individual and the standing of that individual. It will become a more partisan chamber and the idea that it will be reflective of the national issues of the mid and longer term has been virtually eliminated. The way in which senators are chosen will be linked to party and will, perhaps, be linked to the leadership of the party.

• (1150)

The candidates for election, where senators are elected, will be chosen by parties or by party leaders. Because it will be a house of minorities, they will be bound to party discipline. They will be committed to it before they are chosen to run. Where the provincial premiers decide they should make the choice through their majority in their elected legislatures, they will be bound to another brand of partisanship. What kind of a Senate will that be? I do not believe that Canadians in their right mind, except for the premiers and the prime minister, would want that kind of Senate to represent them; nor do I believe this Charlottetown accord represents the wishes of a majority of Canadians for an elected upper chamber.

What we have seen is that the very people in this country—and they are a very small minority—who wish to avoid being checked in any way, shape, or form by an upper chamber are constituted as the architects of the upper chamber. The Prime Minister, and I do not refer only to the incumbent but to any prime minister, would seek to have as little check by an Upper House as possible, and of course the premiers have no desire to have rivals for their authority here. These are the people who are our architects.

I know senators here share with me many of these views. I have seen no fire for the Charlottetown accord in this chamber on either side of the house. I have seen no argument that it contains a new soul for Canada. I have heard nothing from any senator that says that this will reinvigorate Confederation.

Let me come, then, to what we have before us. For the reasons that Senator Kirby gave and other reasons, I certainly support the resolution being referred to the people of Canada. I have always thought that constitutional changes are the property of the people. I think that is the way to discourage constitutional change except when absolutely required in a country. I do not believe constitutions are ordinary pieces of legislation or that they should be at the will and the whim of passing interest groups. Too much of that is reflected in the Charlottetown accord.

I believe strongly that a referendum process belongs in the Canadian constitution. I wish to God that there had been a referendum before the Canada Act, 1982, had been brought to

law, because the issues that have flowed in the last ten years would have been settled then. This country would now be responding to the economic and social challenges that the world is seeing. Those are challenges, as all senators know, that are immense. It will be a struggle for Canada in the years ahead to meet its present standards of excellence. Other societies are on the march. Other societies have achieved technical —

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: I wish to advise the senator his time has expired. Does he have unanimous consent to continue?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Austin: Other societies have achieved enormous technical advances, and they have a sense of their own identity. That sense of identity, whether it be German, Japanese, American, or Mexican, brings about a common sense of being in the world. It brings about a sense of team work. It brings about a sense of purpose. We are a country still struggling to evolve a common identity. We are very much still a new country in that sense, and we have not forged for ourselves an identity which is a rallying point for the people of Canada.

Marshall McLuhan said, at an earlier time and in a happier Canada:

Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity.

I think if he were here today, he would want to rewrite that particular statement. I think we have not yet learned how to live without an identity. Of course what Marshall McLuhan was describing was the highest and most noble characteristic of any nation, to understand that its identity is in its compassion towards its peoples, its tolerance of difference, the fairness of its legal system, the effectiveness of its democracy, and its capacity to earn a standard of living which is at least equal to that of any other country in the world.

It is with a heavy heart and no enthusiasm, as honourable senators have seen, that I make these remarks. I will answer Senator Murray's question before he asks it. Yes, I will support the Charlottetown accord on condition:

On condition that I am satisfied that it quiets the issue of constitutional change in this country for a reasonable period of time and that the government will forthwith state that its purpose is to conclude these issues within the Charlottetown accord in constitutional terms and then leave the question of constitutions for a long period of time and turn to other issues; on the condition that statements such as those being made in Quebec and Ontario, that this is only a way station in the evolution of the Canadian identity and constitution, and that there will be another station immediately ahead of us, are not part of the issue and are not part of the government's purpose.

Senator Murray: How do you expect those conditions to be met prior to October 26?

Senator Austin: I want a statement from the Prime Minister on behalf of his government that the issues contained in