

is strong in British Columbia. However, there is also a sense of disaffection amongst a substantial number of people in my province about the weight and significance that British Columbia will hold and deliver to the Canadian Confederation of the future.

British Columbians have a sense of themselves as an expanding province, as a province which is Canada's gateway to the Pacific and Canada's western province in the north-south axis of North America. A very substantial number of the people of North America live in the north-south corridor from California to Alaska. It is a region that has an awareness of itself as a region.

In the Pacific Northwest we talk about regional arrangements and we give it the name Cascadia. There has been a strong movement in the province of British Columbia, as well as in Alberta, along with the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska and some parts of northern California, to develop regional ties, to reduce barriers in trade and the movement of peoples and to reduce the qualitative legal barriers that domestic laws on both sides of the border have created, so as to allow the development of a new sense of society, and of course more active commerce.

Senator Frith: Qualitative legal barriers?

Senator Austin: I am talking about customs tariffs and the whole array of politically imposed and regionally imposed—in the sense of states and provinces—barriers to movement. This development of Cascadia I see, along with many British Columbians, as a positive development. It has been furthered, however, by an increasing sense of isolation from the east-west ties. What has gone on in central Canada, what Senator Kirby called Upper Canada and also Lower Canada, the old province of Canada, is seen by many in British Columbia as increasingly less relevant to the interests and the affairs of the people of British Columbia. I regret that. The development of positive attitudes to a region is consistent with national loyalties. I believe that the Canada that we have been committed to, the Canada that I believed in and do believe in, is a noble experiment and demands our first loyalty and our first commitment.

Today, many British Columbians are asking whether there is sufficient reason to give Canada that level of commitment and loyalty. Of course British Columbia will remain in Canada. Of course British Columbia will accept the political institutions that are achieved in the Charlottetown accord, if they are acceptable to the rest of Canada. There is a difference between the spirit of commitment and the form of commitment. It is that spirit of commitment that is in issue in British Columbia today.

In terms of British Columbia's achievements in these negotiations, I believe that the leadership of the province of British Columbia has much to account for in terms of its responsibilities to the people of British Columbia. I do not bring blame to

[Senator Austin.]

the total constitutional process. Each province in these negotiations is here to look after its own interests. The federal government, to give it its due, has earnestly sought a national compromise. As one observer of Canada stated, "a Canadian is someone who takes moderation to extreme." That is a good definition of some of the negotiating positions of the federal government.

With respect to the issue that I touched on at the beginning—the role of British Columbia in the federal process—I believe that through the results of the negotiating process and the lack of a fixed vision on goals, to which Senator Kirby referred, this Senate as it will be reconstituted by the Charlottetown accord will, so far as British Columbia is concerned, be of no particular significance. The sense that British Columbia has truly an appropriate role and impact on the exchange of ideas, the exchange of issues that manage Canada, that make Canada grow, that make us a greater country, has been damaged, and the result of the Charlottetown accord will leave British Columbia with a larger sense of indifference than ever before.

I have always seen Parliament as the place for the trade-offs within a democratic political system which create a greater good for us all. I have always seen the genius of the British parliamentary system as leaving something for each part of the negotiating process and for each interest in that negotiating process.

When we set out to deal with constitutional issues in the era of the early 1970s and again in the early 1980s, it was to make and reinforce the supremacy of Parliament as a place for the negotiation, trade-off and settlement of the key issues of the Canadian Confederation; it was building this Parliament that we saw as the absolute fundamental issue in the greatness of Canada and in the working together of its peoples. In that sense, the Charlottetown accord is an absolute failure. "Absolute" is a strong word. It is a failure. In the Charlottetown accord we have created parallel structures that weaken this Parliament. We have a regime of premiers who are also now part of the national governance of this country although they are not elected nationally. In the Charlottetown accord we have agreed that we will have a separate system of consensus outside of this Parliament with respect to the structures and many of the policies that will affect the running of this country. I think that weakens Canada.

So far as this chamber is concerned, while I have always advocated an elected Senate, and did so at the first opportunity I had to speak in this chamber when I became a senator, I did not have in my mind—and could never have had in my mind—the concept of the Senate as it is described in the Charlottetown agreement. That Senate will not represent western interests. It will not serve effectively as a check on the executive, which was one of its principal reasons for being brought into existence originally. I cannot see its role as effective in serving the interests of the minorities of this country. In fact, to be frank, senators, the future Senate described in the Charlottetown agreement will be a standing royal commission,