

I am not alone in these concerns in Atlantic Canada. I am equally worried about the potential transfer of jurisdiction over manpower training and labour market development to the provinces. Self-administered, poorer regions could become low-skill labour ghettos, inimical to the interests of Atlantic Canadians. The implications for Canada's poorest provinces are clearly enormous.

Let me look briefly at the Triple-E. The trendy alliteration has been almost hypnotic. It obscures the fact that there is very little substance to most of the "E"s. The Charlottetown deal will provide for a new Senate which is as unequal as it is ineffective, and as it is at core unrepresentative.

Allow me to begin with the procedures for election envisaged by the agreement. I do not think that anyone in this chamber is unaware that provincial governments can control the election process. The Senate, it is anticipated, will become an antechamber of rampant partisanship—an antechamber of differing classes of senators rather than a chamber of sober second thought.

I am on the record as being a solid supporter of an elected Senate. However I am concerned with the elected Senate as proposed. I think it must be remembered that while the Senate has always had a regional role, senators were meant to represent their regions or their provinces and not their provincial governments. I throw out a word of warning in this regard. We must exercise vigilance in introducing congressional and confederal elements into the Canadian parliamentary system. We must, as a people, think this aspect through with care.

I am equally persuaded that the Charlottetown proposals will not in any fashion lead to a more effective Senate. To begin with, I would like to remind those who wish to reform the Senate for reform's sake that there is much considerable testimony that the Senate as presently constituted does perform useful and necessary functions as a legislative chamber. It is also worth remembering that the senators themselves have, in the past, attempted to reform the Senate in very useful ways. However, the time and circumstances were never right.

We are now told that the Senate should become a protector of minorities and regional expectations. I am fully in support of such a legitimate role for the Senate. But the Charlottetown deal does not confer such a role on the upper chamber; indeed it arguably threatens the useful functions now carried out in the Senate.

There is a temptation for reformers to make the best the enemy of the good. Canadians must be warned that there is very little effectiveness for a new Senate in the proposed agreement. There is very little equitability in it either. The deal ensures the dominance of the centre in the Canadian Confederation. With the new composition in the House of Commons, the Charlottetown numbers game guarantees the perpetual subordination, in my opinion, of Atlantic Canada in federal decision-making. Therefore I ask the citizens of Atlantic Canada to be vigilant in these times.

[Senator Graham.]

I do not want anyone to misunderstand my position. Who can say "no" to a request for a referendum? I am not asked to debate the Charlottetown package here at present. I am asked to say "yes" or "no" to an issue involving the Canadian people as vital agents in constitutional change—in fact, as agents of last resort. I say "yes" to this. And when October 26 comes around, I will say "yes" again. I will do so because national unity is a process and we must keep that process on track.

I do not see this as a national exercise involving winners and losers. If that were the case, Nova Scotia would be a loser, except that we would be out of the constitutional quagmire for a long time. We want to get on with the business of government, because times are hard and the challenges of an age of globalization are great.

I do not see this as a national exercise involving renewal or decay. I ask only one thing of Canadians: I ask them to exercise vigilance in their choice on October 26 and reflection and perseverance in ascertaining their vote. For the issue is not simply: Do you love Canada? The issue is whether we are prepared to work overtime in an unfinished struggle. Canada is a nation state in constant transition. It is a daily act of will. We must ask ourselves if we are prepared to be late for dinner in the service of our country, in the service of constitutional peace. I believe the answer will be "yes", for that again is the Canadian way.

Hon. John B. Stewart: Honourable senators, where they have been used, constitutional referendums have been intended to prevent executive governments and also legislatures from having a monopoly of constitutional change, and also to provide legitimacy for constitutional amendments.

We are being requested by the government to approve the text of a referendum question to read as follows:

Do you agree that the Constitution of Canada should be renewed on the basis of the agreement reached on August 28, 1992? Yes—No.

This request by the government puts three related questions to the Senate. First, is this the right time to hold a constitutional referendum? Second, is it desirable to promote the constitutional amendment package forecast in the Charlottetown accord? Third, is the wording of the referendum question the appropriate wording?

The government says "yes" to all these questions. And it now asks the Senate to give the same response to each of those three questions. It asks us to say "yes" not to one question but to three questions.

Perhaps what I am about to say next will reveal my background. I will ask what rules should be followed by a government in launching and conducting a referendum when that government wants an affirmative response from the people? The first rule is that the question ought to be neutral. The question ought not to be loaded by the spin doctors, because there is a risk that the members of the electorate will vote "no"