

I was at the committee meetings on this bill last week, although I am not a member. Everyone knows I am not a member of any committee, so I go to all the meetings where they are debating interesting issues. Facing me was a senator — whom I will not name — who did not like what I stood for, although I was talking about Canada.

Some people who are trying to build a country get sick and tired of the nonsense they hear when talking about the great motivation for many of us, especially for new Canadians and young Canadians, of building a country. It is not enough to say that we have a great country. No one is more respectful of our gracious Queen Elizabeth II than I.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of Canada — I say it in French, I said it in Quebec and I will repeat it in both languages. I am not afraid of public opinion when I know we are right. And now they accuse us of being against the monarchy.

[English]

Canada is a country that we build every day, slowly, with respect for each other, but moving forward. Every generation must take a step toward Canadianization.

• (2100)

I do not believe changing the appearance of a coin will be opposed.

I had the experience of watching an official discussing this matter on television. He spoke absolute nonsense. I would enjoy entering into a debate with him.

Honourable senators, every gesture counts in building a Canadian identity. The note from the minister says, in English, "Oversee effigy of Her Majesty the Queen," and, "Reverse to be determined by government after public consultation on most appealing team." I am told there were 17,000 applicants.

I did not hear of anyone in Montreal or west Quebec being asked to apply. I used to think that an effigy of Mr. Pearson or Mr. Diefenbaker would be a good choice, but now I am of the opinion that one coin should honour a woman because four male prime ministers have already been honoured.

Honourable senators, I am talking about the Canadianization of our institutions. The country is burning, and people do not realize it. Those of us who passionately talk about our country are ridiculed by some, even by some senators. I have spoken in every province on this issue. Every time I discuss this topic, everyone demonstrates enthusiasm.

In 1964, I was invited as a new member to speak in British Columbia. A few days before I was to speak, I started receiving calls from people who told me that I should not discuss certain controversial issues. I touched on every subject I was advised not to discuss and I survived. In fact, I made many friends, some of whom became members of Parliament. Five are ministers of the Crown. My exchanges with them occurred when they were young Liberals.

We have established a committee which is asking Canadians, in the words of the representative of the minister: "Do you want to have a \$2 coin?" The response was divided 50-50. However, as soon as it was pointed out that \$223 million would be saved by the minting of such a coin, then, of course, 85 per cent voted in favour of the coin. No committee has been established to ask Canadians: "Would you like to continue the Canadianization of our institutions?" That question has already been decided.

People visiting Canada are curious about who is depicted on our different coins and bills, and I am sure that curiosity would continue if we were to depict a woman on one of our coins.

Honourable senators, I would support the clause that provides that the Queen shall be depicted on the coin because if it is proposed that that provision be rejected, then the bill will not be passed. Progress is important, but in progressing, we must respect the past.

Why should we not honour the first citizen of this country on a new coin? What would be wrong with having an Inuit or an Indian leader depicted on one of our coins? The millions of people who carry them will be reminded of what this country is all about.

I have made concession after concession since I arrived in Parliament where it seems that some are more at home than others. Shall I explain that comment?

Senator Gigantès: No.

Senator Prud'homme: Coming from anyone else, I would be upset, but I accept such a comment from Senator Gigantès.

When will we all come together — forget we are Liberals, Conservative, independents — on a matter which could mean so much for young, new Canadians?

Where are the people of courage who are not afraid to go against the public opinion? We have only people who are like weather vanes, and when you follow a weather vane, you never know where you are. By the time you catch the wind, the weather vane —

[Translation]

The weather vane has already turned.