

conferences feeling more cheerful than I thought I would because I realized that the others who had attended also felt like Canadians. On October 26, they will be looking at this series of proposals, this mixture of legal and nonlegal proposals, with a very practised eye. I think they will reach the right decision.

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham: Honourable senators, "there is no wisdom like frankness", said Benjamin Disraeli a century ago. I hope I can comply with this worthy counsel. I believe I have tried to do so for the 20 years I have spent in this chamber.

Last Friday I spoke in the Senate about a panel I chaired on United Nations peacekeeping the previous weekend in Mainz, Germany. I told honourable senators that it was a cause of some reflection on my part, a reflection on the kind of country I want Canada to be, a reflection on why we had developed a pathfinder role in this area. I referred to General Lewis MacKenzie's remarks when he pointed out to me, on his return from Sarajevo, that every country in trouble takes note of the Canadian telephone number and says, "Hey, we would like you to come and help out here too." I pointed out that when our brother calls and asks us to help out as his peacekeeper I confidently expect that the response will be yes. I said that I expect Canadians will do that because they realize peace is a process, and we as Canadians must keep that process on track.

Oliver Wendell Holmes once said that the great thing in this world is not so much where we are but in what direction we are moving. These are words I cherish as a Canadian because national unity, like peace, is a process. We must work hard to keep that process on track. In fact, we as Canadians do have the privilege of working overtime in the service of our special community, in the interests of our compassionate northern democracy.

Canadians as a people have rejected the status quo as their master. Something new has been created here but the struggle is unfinished. I see this as a source of optimism and a source of challenge. I have always believed it to be impossible to set boundaries to the Canadian spirit.

As I flew home from Europe last week, I witnessed the geographic symbolism of our unfinished struggle as a people. From the air the coastline of this great country seems almost reluctant to relinquish control to the Atlantic. The land itself is locked in a perpetual struggle for dominance with the sea. The struggle is unfinished. Water, lakes, ice, the Laurentian Shield, the prairies, the Rockies, all are locked in a struggle for supremacy as the traveller proceeds through the vastness of Canada. We remain as pioneers to many. How else can it be? To the aerial traveller it appears to be merely circumstance which cements this thin strip together north of the U.S. border. Canadians know differently. They have rejected the status quo in favour of an unfinished struggle. They have decided that the direction in which they are moving is more important than where they are presently.

For the Europeans I spoke with recently, there is a sense of genuine concern and wonderment about the present state of

our union. Many of them are aware that our experiment in nation building has led to a functioning multicultural federation. It has become a source of encouragement to those who wish to build a European community, a common house from the Atlantic to the Urals. They look to us for encouragement. We have built such a common house from the Atlantic to the Pacific in the Canadian way. We have demonstrated to the international community that nation building is, indeed, a daily act of will. We have demonstrated there are no boundaries to the energies of our people. As D'Arcy McGee pointed out in Halifax in 1864, "Only those who have a vested interest in their own insignificance have opposed our union".

So Europeans say with concern, many of them fluent in five or six languages—a source of joy and challenge to them, not of fatigue—"We read that you are suffering constitutional fatigue; that many of you will do anything to put an end to your unfinished struggle. We hear and read that Canadians are tired of the process of nation building. Such a disappointment", many of them said to me. Canadians are known to be global adventurers, scornful of marginality; a country whose institutions are the envy of the world.

Canada has been known as a common house whose foundations rest in responsible radicalism. It is a special kind of place; yet, today, many pioneers in the international community look to us for counsel on the parameters of democratic pluralism. They look to us for blueprints by which to build psychic bridges across Europe from a nation whose engineering feats in their construction are legendary. Instead, they hear that Canadians are tired; they suffer constitutional weariness. But most of the world's population would give anything to trade their problems for ours.

In Atlantic Canada it goes without saying that times are hard. Our human resources have been marginalized. It is the marginalization of our resource which is the fundamental tragedy of our time. Poverty frequents the once proud communities of Atlantic Canada. It has become a generational problem. Too many younger people have lost the tools they need to make things happen, to make change happen. For too many Canadians these tools are rusting away. We are a nation whose statistics speak of underinvestment in productivity—in economic productivity, and in social productivity. The statistics speak of our humiliation. Unemployment stalks the land unimpeded, particularly in my part of the country. The confidence of our people—the collective will of our people to continue—is sapped.

• (1640)

With this in mind, like many other Canadians I am mindful of the imperfections of the Charlottetown accord. I am concerned about the potential threat to minimum national standards in areas such as medicare, day care and the like presented by this prospectus, by this general agreement. I know that the relevant amendments remain to be negotiated. However, I am alarmed at the implications presented by the spending power provisions.