

am as anxious as any member of the Senate to have Quebec sign the Constitution.

By the way, it may not surprise anyone in this chamber to know that we could have had a deal with Quebec a long time ago, including a deal with the separatist government of René Lévesque, if we had offered Quebec a veto. That is no great achievement. But this government gave away more than that. It gave away the authority of the spending power in many fields to the point where we will not have any national standards in some programs in the future.

Senator Murray: Come on!

Senator Olson: Senator Murray ought to know that we know enough about human nature to realize that a province will take the money. I do not care whether it is Alberta, Quebec or Ontario—although perhaps some of the smaller provinces may have a problem with this—but if the provinces are told to bring in the program the way the federal government has set it up, or is offered fiscal compensation for the program, the provinces will take the money every time.

Senator Murray: And?

Senator Olson: And so we will no longer have programs that have a national minimum standard, and that, as far as I am concerned, is a tragedy.

Senator Murray: You clearly do not understand the text.

Senator Roblin: What about the Federal Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act?

Senator Olson: I know about that. When we set that block funding up, it was highly agreeable to the provinces, and for good reason. Yet, we have realized such distortions as some provinces, under a concept of a 50-50 spending arrangement, receiving over 100 per cent of the costs for some of their programs, namely, their program for post-secondary education. Even some fairly wealthy provinces received up to 85 to 90 per cent of the cost under that program, so I know that that has not worked.

Senator Roblin: Perhaps we can make this retroactive and correct some of your mistakes.

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, all I am trying to do is make sure that the Parliament of Canada does not make a mistake that cannot be corrected. Therefore, I think the Senate should take its responsibility and establish a committee of the Senate and call whatever witnesses the committee would like to hear. I suppose the committee may want to call the Honourable Senator Murray, although we can question him from his seat in the chamber as far as that is concerned. However, there are a number of other people the committee might want to invite. The committee might want to invite some of the premiers of the provinces to determine whether or not they are ready to give back the veto in the second round.

Senator Barootes: The premiers have already agreed.

Senator Olson: They have agreed, but I want to know whether what Senator Murray said a few minutes ago regarding waiting until the second round has any validity. I do not

know whether Premier Bourassa has agreed to say, "We will take the veto for a little while, and for that we will sign, but when the second round comes up, it goes back on the agenda." That is the implication of what he just said. I asked him directly, "Is it on the agenda?" I think his answer was: "I do not think it was; it said other things."

● (1520)

I did not want to make a long speech, I just wanted Senator Murray and other senators to know of my deep concern about this matter. I do not believe that Canada should be thrust back into a straitjacket, but I do not believe that we can avoid it if we pass this accord. Therefore, the Senate should take on its responsibility and go through the process that will lead to that kind of responsible action by this chamber.

Senator Murray: Would the honourable senator permit a question?

Senator Olson: I would like that!

Senator Murray: The honourable senator indicated two reservations that he has about the accord: One relates to the fact that the list of subjects requiring unanimity for an amendment of the Constitution has been added to; and the other objection that he took was to the provision regarding new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

His national leader, Mr. Turner, has already announced that, notwithstanding various reservations that he may have or matters that he thinks can be improved, these matters do not outweigh the important achievement that is realized by this constitutional resolution, and, therefore, he and his colleagues will be voting at the end of the day, if necessary, in favour of the resolution in its present form. Is that Senator Olson's position?

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, I suppose I can take another 12 or 14 minutes to repeat my position, but I thought that I had set it out clearly and succinctly. I know the trap that Senator Murray is trying to set for me, but I am like an old coyote: I have been around long enough to know that you do not put your feet in those funny little traps, and I will not do so.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Will someone adjourn the debate?

Senator MacEachen: Honourable senators, I will move the adjournment.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: It is moved by the Honourable Senator MacEachen, seconded by the Honourable Senator Frith, that further debate on the motion be adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate.

Senator MacEachen: Honourable senators, I should explain that it would be better to have the procedural situation clarified before proceeding.

Senator Roblin: I wonder whether we should adjourn the debate under the circumstances, because it might involve certain problems when the item comes up again, depending on