

will be a new beginning for Aboriginal people and will lead to the end of the cycle of poverty and dependency.

Honourable senators, this agreement is a major step in the right direction—but this agreement is not perfect. It is a compromise, and a compromise with many problems.

I have several specific problems with this accord that I want to put before you today.

First, under this deal the individual and minority rights of the Charter will be undermined by Quebec's distinct society clause. The Charter was put there by my party to protect individuals and minorities from the tyranny of the majority. Quebec's French-speaking majority should never be permitted to suppress the rights of the English-speaking minority, any more than Canada's English-speaking majority should be permitted to suppress the rights of its French-speaking minority.

Second, in my view, culture as described in the agreement gives the provinces powers that no federal government in our country has ever had. For the record, "a province should have responsibility for cultural matters within their province". But the federal government should have responsibility for cultural matters that transcend provincial boundaries.

I would remind honourable senators that the reason there is a Canada clause in this agreement as opposed to simply the distinct society clause is that Canadians demanded that the federal government have a role in protecting minority rights throughout Canada—and in particular within Quebec, if they are to be given added powers through a distinct society clause.

It is no mere accident that the words "The role of the Federal Parliament and the provincial legislatures to preserve the fundamental characteristics of Canada . . . is affirmed" were dropped after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord. Canadians spoke out and said in no uncertain terms that the federal Parliament should not be restricted to preserving the status quo. It, like the Quebec government, should have the opportunity to actively promote culture. Again, I quote from the accord.

The Government of Canada commits to negotiate cultural agreements with provinces in provision of their lead responsibility for cultural matters within the province and to ensure that the federal government and the province work in harmony.

Honourable senators, I have yet to see the parochial interest of any provincial government in this country be in harmony. In the last eight years alone, we have seen a constant struggle for provincial powers, and this agreement talks of harmony?

If that was not enough, the Prime Minister has said that the wording "The federal government should retain responsibility for national cultural institutions, including grants and contributions delivered by these institutions" has subsequently been changed after Charlottetown. It will now require those national institutions to get provincial approval to make grants to organizations, leaving them only the power to grant to individuals. This means that the Quebec government will be able

[Senator Wood.]

to stop any federal funds from being used to support English theatre—or for any cultural minority for that matter. This also means that the Alberta government can stop the federal government from supporting French culture within Alberta. So who punishes their minority first in the name of the majority, and who simply punishes their minority in retaliation?

There is still another major issue affecting the very essence of Canada, personally disconcerting to me as co-chairman of the Official Languages Committee, and that is a sentence which pertains to forestry, mining, tourism, housing and recreation. One of the terms of the agreement would state that, "... consideration of service to the public in both official languages *should* be considered a *possible* part of such an agreement."

Honourable senators, does this mean we are going to renege on the Official Languages Act? The words "should" and "possible" render the whole spirit of the agreement suspect, and I really need clarification on this item.

There is another issue here. Today, this chamber has been asked to approve a question for the Canadian people to see if they will agree to permit the Constitution of Canada to be changed, based on the August 28 agreement, even though there have already been subsequent changes. Does this mean that, if they vote "yes" in the referendum, this latest change will be overturned, or does the fact that this referendum is not binding mean that the whole agreement can be renegotiated? I do not know the answer.

Canada is a multicultural society, not just a bicultural society. The federal government must never be limited in its role of protecting minorities.

My third criticism is that this deal has given us a half-elected, half-effective Senate. What happens when this is combined with an even larger House of Commons?

Let me quote the text of the August 28 agreement:

The Constitution should be amended to provide that senators are elected, either at large by the population of the provinces and territories of Canada or directly by the members of their provincial or territorial legislative assemblies.

Honourable senators, Britain tried to put the same kind of clause into the agreement covering the European Community, but it was rejected in favour of direct election, and for good reason.

First of all, whenever a separatist provincial government is in power in Quebec—and several of my colleagues opposite will recall that the separatists came to power not because voters wanted separation, but because voters wanted change—whenever separatists control the government, what can we look forward to in this chamber? We can look forward to a separatist sitting here in my seat. Do you think for a moment that even one such separatist senator would represent the English and the minorities of Quebec? Minorities would