

closed by what appears to be, as many have observed here in their speeches today, an attempt to abolish the Senate without actually abolishing it.

There are some non-constitutional opportunities through the time frame which a joint setting could take to deliberate or deal with legislation. There could be a reduction in the size of the House of Commons so that the ratio of senators to MPs would be more realistic; there are perhaps other means that could evolve to address some of the concerns we have. "Evolve" is a relative term. I want to emphasize that it would have to be something that we could see happening soon, from a pre-October 26 perspective.

Honourable senators, I could talk about other aspects, but they have been dwelt upon in great detail and very well on both sides of the debate, judging by what I have read of yesterday's proceedings, which I missed, and from the debate I have heard today.

The issue for me as to whether or not this is a supportable package from the perspective of my province and my region has a great deal to do with more than is on the table. I have tried to describe what that "more" might be. If that "more" is not there, I think this proposal is in trouble in my province. I cannot speak for other areas.

I am very sensitive to the misinterpretation of that by other parts of Canada, in particular, Quebec. I regret that, but I must weigh that against the sense of betrayal that would be felt in my province in the event that this consensual agreement proceeded through all the detail. The feeling that we have as an electorate in that region is that we have addressed our issue, that the different kind of governance did not occur. That sense of betrayal would be devastating and I think would create just as big a problem. We must avoid that.

I support the idea of a referendum. I will vote for the legislation that we are considering now. I wanted to talk about the substance to some degree, and I have because I think it is important. Others have done it. Those are my principal concerns with respect to the Senate reform issue.

Hon. Louis-J. Robichaud: Honourable senators, I have noticed that all of the speakers this afternoon have come from this side of the house.

Senator Murray: Not so.

Senator Robichaud: Well, almost. It may be that we succeeded in putting the members on the government side of the house to sleep. They have not been very vocal this afternoon, but a lot of people on this side have been very eloquent. I will not name anybody in particular, but I was impressed with the quality of this debate.

I will not go into any matters of technicality; I will deal with no numbers—numbers of seats, or numbers of senators or of members in the House of Commons. I will not do that. I will talk for about 30 seconds or so on principles, on the essence of what is before us.

[Senator Hays.]

In my opinion, the resolution before us should not exist in the first place. I think we should have left the situation the way it was after 1981. I think we created a monster and the monster is there because it has been created by the government. We have to face a situation where there is a monster. We have to take a vote on the 26th of October. We should not have to, but we have to. And we have to make a decision.

It took me some time to make up my mind as to whether I would vote "yes" or "no". It took me some time. Maybe 30 minutes. But I have decided that I will vote "yes." I will vote "yes" because it is a lesser evil. Voting "no" throughout the country, I think, would be disastrous. It would be bad for the country.

But I will say this. An amendment to the Constitution is not the end of the world. It is not its Constitution that controls a province or a country. It is the people who are in place who control it. Under the Constitution that we have had for 125 years, we have been prosperous and, as Senator Sparrow said, we became the envy of the rest of the world. Why did we not leave it alone?

But we have to face the fact that certain changes have been suggested. I do not care about the changes that have been suggested. I do not care what will emanate from future conferences—because there will be changes. Bureaucrats, lawyers, are going to get together and they will amend certain things some more. What the heck? It is the people that we put in place who count for the welfare of the country.

And I say this to my fellow Canadians. Let us get on with the work. Let us get this problem behind us. Let us get on with the country. Let us get on with the economy of this country. I will vote "yes."

Louis St. Laurent, I remember, in 1957, after he had been defeated, was asked what part he would take in the election. He said, "Well, I will vote and, well, I may tell the people how I will vote."

I am going to vote "yes", and I am going to tell the people why I voted "yes."

Hon. Pat Carney: Colleagues, I have listened to many excellent speeches here this afternoon. I have agreed with some of the speakers, particularly some of the remarks of Senator Ray Perrault. I have disagreed with others. But I want us to be mindful of the fact that we are not voting on the constitutional package at this point in time. Because of the emotion that has been expressed, that may be overlooked. We are voting on the text of a referendum question. Surely those of us who intend to vote "yes" on this motion can do so calmly and without the emotion that has been generated today.

The question before us is:

Do you agree that the Constitution of Canada should be renewed on the basis of the agreement reached on August 28, 1992?