

society. To me, and to literally millions of other Canadians, that is not new. Quebec has had a distinct society since Champlain sailed up the St. Lawrence River in 1618.

Senator Comeau is not here but I do not think he will mind me saying this. He pointed out something to me that I think should be corrected. There is a publication that states that Champlain sailed up the St. Lawrence River in 1618 and founded the first permanent French settlement in North America. It may be a play on words, but I want to remind honourable senators and others that Champlain sailed from St. Croix Island in 1604 to Port Royal in Nova Scotia, where he founded the first permanent settlement by Europeans in North America, and it was French Acadian. That is just a little correction that I think should be made.

By the way, as I mentioned once before in the Senate, there was an attempt to correct me by a Governor of Florida years ago who insisted that St. Augustine, Florida, was the site of the first permanent settlement in North America. I told him that was absolutely incorrect, that it was Port Royal, as I still maintain, and I was backed up by the five governors of the New England states.

Champlain sailed up the St. Lawrence River and Quebec was founded. It has been a distinct society within Canada since then. As a colony, it was distinct. As a province, it has been distinct in its culture and its language. The rule of law of Quebec is based on the civil code rather than the common law, which is very distinct.

As former Premier David Peterson said in the Conference Centre a few years ago, every schoolboy and schoolgirl in Canada must be taken aback by the opinion that some people held at the time that Quebec was not a distinct society, because every schoolboy and schoolgirl recognizes and appreciates that Quebec does have a distinctiveness that other Canadian provinces do not have, in its language, its culture and its rule of law.

The other items in the Canada clause are building blocks for the future of our country.

I was privileged over the years to attend every conference on Aboriginal rights. Over those years I did not understand, and still do not, what specifically is meant by "Aboriginal self-government". I think this document does the right thing. It sets out that the Aboriginal peoples of Canada have a right to self-government, the definition of which will be worked out within a period of five years.

I was privileged to participate in those discussions over those years and am now again privileged to be a participant in ensuring that the Aboriginal people of Canada, the first Canadians, are getting this recognition for self-government.

I see no difficulty with the rest of the agreement. I agreed with the reform of our institutions before and I agree with it now. The situation of the Senate and the House of Commons is a little different. Their expansion is to ensure equality among the provinces as far as numbers are concerned, and the

number of members of the House of Commons and Senate does not increase in total.

With regard to the social and economic union, we are now entrenching in the Constitution many of those items that we have enjoyed for many years, including all of our great social services that are the envy of other people throughout North America and probably the western world. High quality primary and secondary education for all residents of Canada will be included in the social union as will protecting and sustaining the environment.

Under the economic union, the people of Ontario and Western Canada will finally be able to drink Moosehead beer, for instance. It was ridiculous, on going to Florida, to see people on the beaches there wearing T-shirts declaring "The Moose is Loose" when the moose was not loose in Ontario, although it is now. Showing my partiality as a Nova Scotian, I hope that the Moosehead you drink here in Ontario is brewed in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia and not in Saint John, New Brunswick. I still have a bit of that left in me.

• (2210)

Honourable senators, the economic union will go a long way to curing all of the problems that we have had in Canada and will provide for the free movement of goods, services and capital throughout the country, which will add to the competitive spirit that we have in this country, and will continue to have in the years to come.

I wish now to deal with the federal spending power. Over the years, I have found it extraordinary that people would argue about entrenching in the Constitution such privileges as we have enjoyed over the years, such as the right of provinces to have programs which are compatible with national programs, and with the objectives of those national programs. The provinces would run their own shop, so to speak, and be provided with funds from Ottawa. That is only entrenching what we have been doing since the 1950s and through the 1960s with medicare and hospitalization. Those people who say that the brakes will be put on national programs, I can tell you they are absolutely incorrect. It will not do such a thing. The economic union and social union, in my opinion, will be entrenching in the Constitution of Canada matters such as that which we have enjoyed for many years.

Honourable senators, I have no hesitation in saying "yes" to this agreement. It is not a perfect agreement, but it is one that certainly will ensure that our country stays together and that our country will continue to be strong.

Honourable senators, I want to take a few minutes to congratulate those people who were involved in the agreement. Some people may think that attending conferences is not difficult, or not stressful, or not hard work. I want to assure you that it is. Senator Murray knows that. He participated in many of them, and they were stressful. It is hard work. Those who think that the conference begins at 9:00 in the morning and ends in the afternoon are wrong. Some of those meetings go on well into the night; 12 hours, 16 hours a day. They are very stressful.