

ings of the present Canadian Senate, Mr. Mark MacGuigan, member of Parliament and now minister, dealt with Senate reform, and Senator Richard Stanbury gave the senators' reaction in this regard.

Mr. Hayes stated that we must realize that if important changes are made in the Senate they will affect the workings of our entire parliamentary system. Senator Jacques Flynn stated that by and large the Senate had well fulfilled its role of reviewing legislation considering the delicate situation it finds itself in of being an appointed house while also enjoying absolute veto.

The Honourable Mark MacGuigan stated that the report by the Task Force on Canadian Unity signaled a new approach in the debate on the reform of our federal institutions. He expressed the view that the report would send into oblivion Bill C-60's proposals on the second chamber.

He further said that the matters of exclusive federal jurisdiction could not be discussed in the Federal Council proposed by the Pepin-Robarts report, a significant and major difference from the West German model. He concluded that the recommendations of the Pepin-Robarts report had the merit of narrowing the discussion on Senate reform to the two following choices: some version of the current Senate that would implement the recommendations of the report tabled by the Joint Committee on the Constitution in 1972, or a formula similar to that proposed by the Pepin-Robarts group and inspired by the West German model.

Senator Richard Stanbury objected in principle to the establishment of a Federal Council as proposed by the Pepin-Robarts report. He added that in his view no valid proposal had in fact been put forward to replace the Senate. His experience had convinced him that the role filled by the Senate was absolutely essential to this country's welfare. And, further, that the best contribution to the issue of the second chamber's reform evolved from the work done by the Special Senate Committee on the Constitution that looked into the Senate's own mechanics, in order to determine how the latter could be reformed to correct its current weaknesses. While permitting interesting exchanges, the discussions at that forum on the Senate pointed to the difficulty of reaching a consensus on Senate reform.

● (1540)

In its first report of October 1978, the Special Committee of the Senate on the Constitution stated that:

This report will not discuss specific alternative proposals for the composition, role and veto power of a second chamber in Canada. Reform is required. Senators would promote it and would be anxious to assist in the process. But the constraints on the time available to your Committee have prevented it from undertaking such a study in time for this report. The committee, having been reconstituted by the Senate, intends to do so in the coming months.

Unfortunately the election of May 22, 1979, prevented the committee from submitting its more complete second report.

Finally, on December 13 of last year, the day the 31st Parliament was dissolved, Senator Stanbury put forward a motion proposing that the Senate form a special Senate committee on the Constitution in order to carry on and finalize the work done during the preceding session. I sincerely hope that the committee will be re-established soon, early in the 32nd Parliament, so that all Canadians may peruse that report complementing the preceding one.

It is impossible to cull all the remarks made by all Canadians and senators interested in this matter which is very much in vogue: Senate reform. In fact, we are trying to square the circle, but honourable senators must realize that the Senate as we know it is now on the wane and we should co-operate to help bring about the necessary reform based on efforts made especially during the last decade, while trying to win other people over to our side. Senators are quite capable of making an in-depth study of proposals to deal with the difficulties and contradictions of Senate reform.

I myself would like to make certain recommendations which are not intended to weaken the Senate but rather to revitalize it.

The first has to do with senators being asked to serve as members of the executive boards of a number of federal government agencies. With this in mind, I would like to give a concrete example concerning the Economic Council of Canada which had on its board the Honourable Senator-Minister Olson.

During a Senate Finance Committee meeting last December 4, the Chairman of the Economic Council of Canada, Dr. Sylvia Ostry, stated as follows, and I quote from page 3 of the English text:

—I would like to draw your attention to the list of part-time members of the Economic Council at the front of the Review. This slim document represents the considerable effort of all of those members acting in purely voluntary roles with no remuneration of any kind than travel expenses. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of myself, Dr. Slater and Dr. Lévesque for the direction, assistance and collaboration of all the Council members. Their influence on, and contribution to, this and other Council documents are of immeasurable value—

[Translation]

Since there is already a senator on the board of the Economic Council, I am convinced that this concept could be applied to other federal government agencies and that members of the Senate would be happy to make such a contribution.

Since Canadians have a poor understanding of the work of the Senate, because it is under-publicized, another recommendation would be to televise the debates of the Senate to improve communication with the public and make Canadians more aware of the extremely important role played by our assembly. I know that the senators have already looked at this sensitive issue. I dearly hope that we can develop a system which will meet with the approval of the Senate. This would