

Tenure of Senators

● (1610)

Gordon Robertson, who is well known for the part he has played in the administrative aspects of government over the past few years, comments in an article in the June-July issue of *Policy Options*:

The Senate has been a favourite target of proposals for reform as well as for abolition.

Here is the statement which I have underlined in the article:

If the Senate were to be abolished and the House of Commons were to become the only chamber of the Canadian Parliament, Canada would become unique among federations.

The Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat put together a document entitled "Proposals on the Constitution 1971-1978". I believe it is apropos to this debate that I put on the record a couple of paragraphs for the benefit of many who may read *Hansard* although I am not sure how many people in the country do. Section 17 of the BNA Act reads:

There shall be one Parliament for Canada, consisting of the Queen, an Upper House, styled the Senate, and the House of Commons.

The act then goes on to describe in section 18 the privileges, immunities and powers to be held by the Senate and the House of Commons. Section 22 reads:

In relation to the constitution of the Senate Canada shall be deemed to consist of Four Divisions:

1. Ontario;
2. Quebec;
3. The maritime provinces . . .
4. The western provinces . . . which four divisions shall . . . be equally represented in the Senate—

The Special Joint Committee on the Constitution (1972) recorded that the present full veto power of the senate over legislation should be reduced to a suspensive veto for six months. I shall be talking about the six-month time-period later in connection with article 44 in the constitutional proposal. The Special Joint Committee on the Constitution (1972) also said:

The investigative role of the Senate, which has gained more importance in recent years, should be continued and expanded at the initiative of the Senate itself, and the Government should also make more use of the Senate in this way.

One of the characteristics which I appreciate about the Senate is that it has power to continue the discussion of a subject, which we in the House of Commons do not have. I have lobbied for some time for the government to bring in changes which would enable the members of the House of Commons to discuss in committee, subjects which we consider important enough to be worthy of committee study. In that regard and without wanting to digress too much, I should refer to three reports which I have mentioned frequently in this House, which have been tabled, upon which all members are awaiting some action from the government and which we would like to discuss further in committee in an effort to speed the passage of further legislation. These reports are, and I will use their popular names, the Finkelman report, the D'Avignon report and the Lambert commission report.

The point is that senators have the opportunity to decide on subjects for discussion and thereby to produce invaluable reports. In fact, while I am on the subject, I have been looking at some of the Senate works of the recent past. Although they will not appear in *Hansard*, I have in front of me quite a stack of books composed of works which I commend to any member of the public as being worth while studying.

These books cover a tremendous range of topics. There is the very recent report called "Child At Risk", which is a report of the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science. There is also the report of the Special Senate Committee on Retirement Age Policies entitled "Retirement without Tears" and there is an excellent report of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty in Canada. There is a report by the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on growth, employment and price stability and a report, which obviously had an effect on the government, by the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada. Of course, Information Canada no longer exists in the form in which it existed when the study was made.

There is the report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Canada Manpower which resulted in some reorganization. Here is a report by the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture which is entitled "Recognizing the Realities of Beef Import Policy for Canada". Here in an excellent four volume work entitled "A Science Policy for Canada", which is a report by the Special Senate Committee on Science Policy, the chairman of which is the Hon. Maurice Lamontagne.

Here is a report in which I have taken a special interest. It is presently two volumes, but undoubtedly there will be more volumes. It is entitled "Canada-United States Relations" and it deals with trade relations with the United States. It is an excellent work. Whether one disagrees or agrees with the content of these works, they provide much food for thought, and they set down their subjects in excellent fashion. I laud the senators for the work they do in this regard.

I do not believe that we give enough publicity to the work performed by the Senate. On looking at the order paper of the Senate and the business proposed for next week, aside from the senators who will be working on the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution which sits all day, every day, and which is doing an incredible job there is much activity. Whether we agree or disagree with the subject under discussion, no one can deny that the members of this committee, both those from the House and from the Senate, are doing a standup job in continuing, day after day, with this rather difficult discussion under the scrutiny of the media.

But also in the following week I notice that there will be a meeting of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on National Defence, the committee dealing with standing rules and orders which is examining the procedure to be followed upon the presentation of the report of the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada. Obviously they are preparing themselves for the time when they will have to study this most important resolution. There will be