

[Translation]

This definition by Sir John A. Macdonald of the membership of the Canadian Senate and the character of its members is partly confirmed moreover in the wording of our Constitution which originally set up three divisions entitled to equal representation in the Senate, namely, Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes.

In the beginning of Confederation, these three areas were represented in the Senate by 24 senators each. It was only when British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Alberta, Saskatchewan and, much later, Newfoundland joined the Confederation that their number was increased to 4, each with 24 senators, the fourth made up of the four western provinces. Then came, and much later as I said, the creation of the Province of Newfoundland and, at the same time, the creation of six new senatorial seats to ensure representation for that new province.

In fact, regional representation in the Senate is emphasized by the requirement that the senators representing Quebec be appointed for well-defined senatorial districts and moreover that they be fully qualified in the senatorial districts for which they are respectively appointed.

Contrary to the House of Lords whose role is not defined in any statute or any other official document, the Canadian Senate has a clearly defined function, namely, to represent, in the nation's central Parliament, the various regions making up the Canadian Federation and, consequently, the vital interests of the different ethnic and linguistic groups composing the population.

Referring again to page 537 of the *Confederation Debates*, Sir John A. Macdonald once again describes the role and function of the Senate as follows, and I quote:

[English]

And is it, then, to be supposed that the members of the upper branch of the legislature will set themselves deliberately at work to oppose what they know to be the settled opinions and wishes of the people of the country? They will not do it. There is no fear of a dead lock between the two houses. There is an infinitely greater chance of a deadlock between the two branches of the legislature, should the elective principle be adopted, than with a nominated chamber—chosen by the Crown, and having no mission from the people. The members of the Upper Chamber would then come from the people as well as those of the Lower House, and should any difference ever arise between both branches, the former could say to the members of the popular branch—“We as much represent the feelings of the people as you do, and even more so; we are not elected from small localities and for a short period; you as a body were elected at a particular time, when the public mind was running in a particular channel; you were returned to Parliament, not so much representing the general views of the country, on general questions, as upon the particular subjects which happened to engage the minds of the people when they went to the polls. We have as much right, or a better right, than you to be considered as representing the deliberate will of the people on general questions, and therefore we will not give way.”

[Translation]

Honourable senators, other aspects of the role of the Senate were also brought out by the Right Honourable Arthur Meighen who wrote the following in the *Queen's Quarterly*, volume 44, page 152, which quotation can be found on page 75 of the Senate *Hansard* for October 9, 1945, and I quote:

Some time ago a prominent and popular Canadian, a man of opposite political association to myself, said, “I am thankful in these days for the Senate! No matter what wild and extreme radicalism may sweep the country the Senate will stand firm; it will save the ship”. This surely is worth saying and remembering. The forces of wild and extreme radicalism must be met right out among the ranks of our people, in their homes and meeting places; there the power of reason and common sense must be applied, the lesson of long experience must be taught, or nothing will save the ship. Surely we have learned from tragedies in other lands that the tide of a mad, militant and persistent majority never can be stemmed. It must not become a majority.

[Translation]

To this quotation, taken from the Senate *Hansard* for October 9, 1945, Senator McGeer added the following comment, which I quote also from page 9 of the *Debates of the Senate* for the same day:

[English]

That is the conception of one of the Senate's duties as stated by a man who graced both our Commons and our Senate with an ability that people in every walk of life and in every political party recognized as outstanding.

● (1550)

[Translation]

To my mind, honourable senators, the Canadian Senate has performed very well, I would even say in masterly fashion, its primary role of representing the regional interests of the country by devoting itself, especially in the last twenty years or so, to the acute problems of certain areas of Canada, and particularly to those of underprivileged groups in our midst.

I shall limit myself to pointing out a few examples of the work of the Senate in that sphere of activity.

First of all, in 1957, its special committee on land use performed an important task. As we know, that committee made a report, amongst other things, on soils study, land inventory, agricultural research co-ordination, the reorientation of agriculture in Canada, water pollution, drainage, erosion, irrigation, claims, reforestation, farm land assembly, farm financing and farm credit. This report contributed considerably to the enactment of the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act and the implementation, in 1961, of ARDA, as well as to the adoption of at least seven other progressive measures on land and farm use.

In 1960, the Senate Special Committee on Manpower and Employment studied the rapidly changing patterns of Canada's labour force, the new specialization standards required, the financing problems of some projects, seasonal unemployment and several other aspects affecting some