

In conclusion, unlike the Reform Party, our government believes in working with Canadians to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of our federal institutions. We have done many of those things already. We have taken a number of steps, for example introduced parliamentary reforms to allow MPs to better represent their constituents, overhauled the committee process to allow for greater input, and so on.

● (1425)

I close by saying that Burt Brown of Alberta is the strongest proponent of a triple E Senate. Everyone in Alberta recognizes that clearly. He is being really responsible. Today he is not talking about a triple E Senate. If members know Burt Brown they will know that he ploughed a giant message in his fields with the words: "It is better together".

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is conventional wisdom among the people who sit at my right and certainly those who sit at my extreme left, no pun intended, that the best thing to do with the Senate would be to do away with it and save the people \$40 million annually.

That could be done but it would be a very shortsighted move. We need a real Senate, not the old people's home that we have over there now, to protect the common people from the House of Commons or, to put it perhaps more succinctly, to protect the public from the PMO.

Every meaningful federal union on earth, save ours, has an elected upper house to protect the rights of the regions. If we look at what has happened in Canada in the last five years, we see there have been two instances where the existence of a real Senate would have permanently blocked some very unsavoury parliamentary legislation. The first instance was the infamous GST which passed because there was a Senate that could be easily manipulated by the Prime Minister.

The second one has already been alluded to by my colleague and that is Bill C-68, the people control bill. They call it the crime control bill but it is a masquerade. If we had a real Senate representing the regions that bill would be consigned to the darkest corner of hell where it belongs.

In the last 50 years there has been no greater public outcry than there has been over that specific piece of legislation. We have the spectacle of the governments of four provinces and two

Private Members' Business

territories lining up together with the protesting citizenry, demanding that the particular bill be stopped. Yet, because the Prime Minister has the ability to manipulate the Senate, to stack it, nothing can be done. There will never be a real democratic system in the country that reflects the views of the regions or of individual citizens unless we have the opportunity to elect two Houses, and both Houses should have power.

This legislation will almost certainly be proclaimed into law. The only hope we have now would be to get a Reform government to repeal it.

I must confess that before I came to this place I was a bit of a Senate basher. I felt that the other place had no place. However I have attended some of the committee hearings that it holds and I must say that they compare very favourably with the ones we hold. The problem is that those committees represent an illegitimate body and therefore cannot make recommendations that have weight.

Even if we cannot get triple E, surely we should be electing our senators. I do not know how many people are aware that in the United States of America, which has triple E, there was a period of more than a century when all its senators were appointed. They were appointed by the state governors. The elected Senate in the United States devolved from an act by the Oregon legislature when it demanded that its senators in that one state be elected. It grew from there and eventually they changed the constitution of the country to accommodate the new realities.

Changes can be made. In the long term I agree with my colleague that we must have triple E. In the short term I would plead with the government to get off its high horse and start allowing the provinces to elect senators to be appointed subject to their election.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1), this item is dropped from the Order Paper.

[English]

It being 2.30 p.m. the House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2.30 p.m.)