

*The Constitution*

its existence. It has not found a new role for the Senate or indicated that it serves a legitimate purpose. It simply wants to keep the Senate while restricting its role in reviewing Government legislation and giving it less time to review economic matters. We will be left with a political body that is neutered in terms of dealing with many matters. However, it will remain a body of patronage so that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and others can place their friends in the Senate.

I was a representative of my Party on the joint committee studying Senate reform. We travelled throughout the country and found that there was not one acceptable solution to Canadians. Many would like to abolish the Senate, many would like an elected Senate and others wanted one which was appointed in part by the provinces. Others would have the Senate play a special role in deciding constitutional matters or political appointments.

While there is no consensus on the purpose of the Senate, Canadians do agree that patronage must stop. I suggest that the Government House Leader convey the message to the Prime Minister that all Canadians want to stop patronage. The Government should put forward its proposals for Senate appointments and what its purpose should be rather than simply presenting a resolution to reduce the power of the Senate while allowing the Conservatives to make appointments just as the Liberals did in the past. That is not the purpose of the Senate and it is not an acceptable proposal to Canadians in a democratic age.

Our Party has long opposed the Senate, not only because of the patronage issue which we abhor, but also because we do not believe that there is any rationale for having a second Chamber, at least as outlined at the present time. Even after sitting on the joint committee on the reform of the Senate, I do not believe that we have found any purpose for the Senate. We have not found an acceptable way to reform the Senate.

Let me deal with some of the reasons we are told that we must maintain a Senate, whether elected or appointed. A principle reason is that we need regional representation because of the nature of this country, with large populations in Quebec and in Ontario and the smaller populations in other provinces. It is suggested that the Senate represents and protects the interest of the regions. That is blatantly false. It is recognized throughout the land that the provincial Governments, their premiers and their legislative assemblies are doing the best job of protecting, working for and speaking on behalf of the interests of the provinces and the regions of this land. No other body, no other second Chamber, will ever have the legitimacy of an elected provincial Government and the elected assembly to which that Government is responsible.

● (1530)

Often we are told the reason we need a second Chamber is to protect the rights of minorities, for example, the minority in terms of a linguistic group in the Province of Quebec. That is not how the Senate is functioning at this time. The Premier of the Province of Quebec is quite able, as was the case with his predecessors, of speaking on behalf of the people of that

province. Also it is interesting to note that a very large proportion of the Members of this House have come from the Province of Quebec and that no Government, with the exception of the one headed by the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark), in the last 20 years survived without the support of a majority of seats from Quebec, and this Government is no different. Obviously the House of Commons, through its elected Members, has had a very strong influence in protecting the interests of Quebec. They have a very strong voice in this Chamber and they usually have a very strong voice in Cabinet. Very seldom do we hear a voice in the Senate speaking out as a regional representative from western Canada, from Quebec or from Atlantic Canada. A good test of that would be for people across the land, who might be listening to this debate, to think of the name of the Senators from their regions. Most Canadians cannot name one Senator from their own provinces. Obviously Senators are not protecting or representing regional interests in an effective manner.

Other Members have indicated that we need the Senate because of its committee work. Probably that was a true statement 15 or 20 years ago when Senator Croll was well known for the work he did on poverty and other Senators were well known for their useful, investigative work on behalf of various concerns. The House of Commons itself has now undertaken that role. We have set up many task forces over the past few years to look into federal-provincial funding, various aspects of transportation, the Canadian role in Central America, the Canadian role in international affairs, inter-regional development, the whole issue of pensions and the specific concerns of the disabled. In other words, we have taken on a role which used to be identified as a role of the Senate, and we have said that elected Members should be involved in that process.

By having elected Members on a task force for the disabled or a task force looking into federal-provincial equalization payments or established programs financing, not only can they do the job very effectively, but when they return to the House they help to educate and to explain to the rest of us exactly what people across the land think about the issues which they were investigating. This is something which does not happen when a Senate committee goes out. The Senate does not report to us. We do not have the kind of communications system with the Senate to know what it has studied or learned across the land. From time to time committees are necessary because, despite that we all have fairly large egos, we do not know it all. Certainly there are people out there who can explain better the problems they face and the solutions they have, which benefits all of us in the House. That is something which can be done and should properly be done by the House.

Two other reasons have been given for having a second Chamber, and they come from the constitutional debates which took place prior to 1867. One was that it would help to prevent mob rule. Basically mob rule has come to be known as democracy. It means that the people elect their representatives, and that those representatives are supposed to come here to speak and work on behalf of those people. Just as important,