

*Private Members' Business*

upper house, with the national interest taking, at best, second place.

The idea of an elected Senate attained prominence in 1981 with the publication by the Canada West Foundation of "Regional Representation—the Canadian Partnership". It was based on the work of Dr. David Elton of the foundation and Mr. Burt Brown of Alberta. In 1982 Senator Duff Roblin, former premier of Manitoba, proposed that senators be elected on a basis similar to the elected system in Australia.

The first federal parliamentary report to espouse an elected Senate was written by the Special Joint Committee on Senate Reform and released in 1983. It is noteworthy that the Senate co-chair of the committee is now the Speaker of the Senate, Senator Gil Molgat of Manitoba.

More recently, the Meech Lake accord proposed a hybrid type of appointment procedure for Senate vacancies, and the 1992 proposed Charlottetown accord proposed an elected Senate. I remember in British Columbia just how this was interpreted by our present NDP government. As a matter of fact, it was the B.C. provincial government's interpretation of the proposals for Senate change in the recent Charlottetown accord that helped to precipitate my entry into politics. At the time there was some suggestion that the provincial government would control the format of how the elections by the people would proceed.

In B.C. statements were being made by elected government MLAs and the premier that there would be equal men and women and the government would look after candidate selection for Senate seats. The first statement flies in the face of Canadian tradition. Canadians have long been committed to a system of merit for job applications. That is, those who can do the job best should do it. And any potential candidates for a Senate position must come from all spectrums of the province, not from government patronage lists.

As a point of interest, we must recognize in our country that to hire employees according to an ethnic and gender preference program is not working. In California, where the selection of employees has been based on preferential treatment based upon race and gender over the last while, Americans are going to see a ballot question in the 1996 election year that will potentially forbid the use of ethnicity or gender as criteria for either discriminating against or granting preferential treatment to any individual or group by the government.

Those who take the time to think realize that discrimination, if it exists, cannot be cured by counter discrimination. It is very divisive and fundamentally unfair.

During the 1980s a unique event in the history of the Senate occurred in Alberta. Alberta enacted legislation to enable persons to stand for election on a province-wide basis to contest a vacant Senate seat. An election was held and Reform Party member Stan Waters topped the polls. He was subsequently summoned to the Senate by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. Unfortunately we lost Stan Waters before he had the opportunity to show Canadians just how valuable an accountable senator could be. The election of Senator Stan Waters is a valuable precedent. Unfortunately, it was not followed with later Senate appointments from Alberta.

That very briefly is the history of how we got to where we are now, the history of why the contents of this motion are so dear to the hearts of all of us who represent the Reform Party.

The triple E Senate should be elected and therefore accountable. It is our belief that a Senate must be popularly elected. In a democratic age in a country that prizes democracy so highly, an appointed upper house lacks legitimacy.

• (1340)

More specifically, elected representation is essential in addressing issues of equity, since an elected Senate would place greater emphasis on increasing the likelihood that people will be elected based on merit rather than appointed simply to fulfil equity quotas. This would also address the longstanding problem of patronage appointments.

Let us take a look at the issue of patronage and the practice of the government to promote adding party members and friends to the Senate, whether as a result of section 26 of the Constitution Act or just to fill vacancies.

Section 26 of the Constitution Act, 1867, provides that in exceptional circumstances an additional four or eight senators may be appointed. This provision was invoked in December 1990, when the Senate systematically opposed passage of the legislation introducing the goods and services tax, legislation that had been passed after much contentious debate in the Commons. Here it could be argued that the Canadian people did not want the GST, but in order to raise more money in taxes—sounds like England in the days of wicked King John and others—the government of the day forced through legislation that people did not want by invoking section 26 and adding more senators.