

I have watched carefully the committees that have been struck by the new government, and am chagrined by the dearth of Senate involvement. We are an integral part of the Parliament of Canada but have been expressly excluded by the Government of Canada.

It is distressing that the Senate has been omitted from this government's parliamentary renewal. The Senate has a fundamentally vital role to play. We as senators can show Canadians — all Canadians — that regional desires and aspirations can be achieved within a unifying force. I believe the Senate can be that unifying force.

The Senate can play a leading role in emphasizing the importance of the regions of Canada so that Canadians will realize that the regional spokespersons are in the Senate, where they are supposed to be according to the Confederation debates. This can be a chamber of unity, where regional differences and similarities are discussed and debated by the representatives of two political parties committed to the continuation of Canada as one Canada, with a grand Quebec. However, in order for us to have credibility in our discussions, changes will have to be made in the manner in which this chamber functions. I refer not to constitutional changes, but to internal changes which can be implemented under the title of "Senate renewal."

In congratulating Senator Fairbairn on her appointment as Leader of the Government in the Senate I want to say how encouraged I am that she seems interested in Senate renewal. I note, for instance, that the February 3 edition of *The Hill Times* reports her as saying that there is a new mood in the Senate which gives us "a real opportunity" to get things done now, perhaps more than ever. She went on to say, "I think senators on both sides are prepared to work hard on the legislative part of the job." The article concludes by saying that she wants to promote the Senate.

In this very chamber when we met on January 20, she said that our whole system of government and Parliament have been viewed with increased cynicism. Senator Fairbairn also said that her government is committed to regaining the respect of Canadians in their Parliament. She emphasized some of the good work of Senate committees. She then concluded her specific comments on the Senate by saying that investigative committee work is "...the kind of work that the Senate is very good at. The government looks forward to this chamber continuing in this important role."

Honourable senators, the Senate has been effective, but I believe it can be more effective and play a more meaningful role in the leadership of this country. I want to say to the Leader of the Government that many of us on this side have been studying ways in which the Senate of Canada can be more effective without the requirement of a constitutional amendment. We have made considerable progress in our work.

Honourable senators will know that we have recently had a two-day special caucus to study renewal, which I had the privilege to chair. Our senators took the process so seriously that

we had nearly a 94-per-cent turnout and excellent participation in all the seminars. We have produced documents which contain substantive recommendations for renewal. Now is the time for united action.

I call upon the Leader of the Government, in consultation with my leader, the Honourable John Lynch-Staunton, to appoint a "Senate renewal" working group, comprised of senators from both sides, with a mandate to put some teeth in those sections of the Speech from the Throne that adapt themselves readily to renewal and reform. After all, in that very speech it stated, "The government is committed to enhancing the credibility of Parliament."

We, the Progressive Conservative caucus, have already done substantive work on renewal. We invite you to join us, because there are a great number of initiatives that must be proceeded with.

• (1610)

Permit me to be more specific. Senator Fairbairn spoke of the important role of Senate committees. A great deal can be done to make committee work in the Senate much more productive and effective. Senator Everett, perhaps, put it best in his farewell speech on Thursday, January 20, 1994 when he said:

...the committee system of this chamber is its heart and soul, both in its legislative capacity and its investigative capacity.

I encourage Senator Fairbairn to engage the Senate in more special joint committees. In my short time here I have been involved in the work of two special joint committees: One dealt with conflicts of interest and the other with constitutional renewal.

I like this approach to policy development. Special joint committees seem to combine the best elements of both chambers. As they are established by a specific reference from the government, there is a feeling that the Senate, through its membership, is contributing in a meaningful way to the development of the political agenda.

Senators bring to the task at hand their varied backgrounds, and the fact that they do not have to seek re-election can add a more imaginative flavour to the committee reports. Those from the other place bring a sense of immediacy — the need to solve the problem quickly.

Professor C.E.S. Franks said of Senate-directed studies that:

These investigations are usually of a higher standard than those by committees of the House of Commons. Reasons for the differences include: First, many extremely able and experienced Canadians sit in the Senate and contribute to this investigative work; second, investigations by the Senate are usually non-partisan; third, Senate investigations do not suffer from excessive exposure in the media; fourth, senators have the time and the leisure to conduct diligent