

The Senate

amendments to our Constitution to amend the powers of our Senate as it exists.

As a western Canadian I have some very strong and personally held views on Senate reform. First, there is the question of representation. It is fashionable, in fact it is very popular in western Canada to support what is called the Triple-E Senate. While those who support the Triple-E Senate certainly have the interests of western Canada and the regions at heart, we have to ask ourselves as western Canadians a few fairly tough questions. Triple E, of course, stands for elected, effective and equal. I think we should move with the greatest of haste to an elected Senate. I think that in a sense would make it more effective. I do worry about the equality of having 10 provinces all with literally the same numbers of Senators. It is often fashionable as well to say, "Well, they do it in the United States". Between tiny Rhode Island and the State of California, which is larger than all of Canada in population, there exist 48 other states with other Senators, 96 in all, who represent the interests of those 48 states. It is not practical to say that in Canada Prince Edward Island should have as many Senators as Ontario. We must consider that there are eight provinces between those two extremes in population.

• (1740)

While I am not ruling out an equal Senate, I believe that it is time, as Canadians who aspire to speak for all regions, to look at this question of balance.

In addition to a balanced Senate, we should examine how we want the process of Senate reform to take place. I know very few Canadians who do not agree with an elected Senate. I suggest that if the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Premiers could meet, with this question of Senate reform at the top of their agenda, they could even consider for the short term keeping the Senate largely the way it is now, made up of 104 members based on the four regions, with 24 Senators from each region and other Senators representing Newfoundland and later entrants to Canada.

I ask Members to consider a formula by which we can elect a Senate with the same number of 104 Senators. One formula which has been suggested is that of proportional representation. As a western Canadian I would far rather see a form of proportional representation rather than "the first past the post" system we use in this House.

That form of proportional representation would balance the same regions we have now. We would have a Senate that represents the political Parties in a completely different configuration in each of the regions, with Senators who legitimately speak as elected representatives. Of course, under my system we would still have Parties, but I would hope that because we would have Senators elected on a slate, by region and by province, the interests of those Senators for regions and provinces would come first.

While political considerations would be factored into any legitimate disagreement with the House of Commons, those

Senators would still speak as representatives of strong regions of Canada. That is just one example. There are many considerations when one examines the many possibilities and combinations for Senate reform.

Let us consider the motion we are debating here today. It calls for a conference of First Ministers and for this conference to establish the parameters, the powers, the representation, and the means of selection. I do not believe any Member of the House would disagree with that very generally worded motion.

I would call upon members of all Parties to consider this as a very loud cry from the House of Commons to get serious about Senate reform. We can leave the specifics to other times. There have been a number of thoughtful representations made over the years by joint House of Commons and Senate committees, interest groups, and other public advocacy centres. All of the provinces have spoken very strongly in the past about Senate reform. However, I believe as a Member of this House that we should pass this motion calling on the First Ministers to work toward arriving at that formula.

Canada is a country with five main regions, with one-third of Canadians who represent neither of the two official founding cultures, and a further third of the people who represent the French language. We live in a country that is very diverse and very challenging. Certainly, the present method of Senate appointments and Senate structure does not accommodate the regions and does not accommodate the unique interests that make up this country, and certainly does not accommodate in a democratic sense the grass root thoughts of most Canadians.

Let us consider this motion as an opportunity to ask serious questions about the Senate. I certainly favour the effective and elected portion of a Triple E Senate. We can have an effective Senate if we elect it. I think we can leave the question of representation to the First Ministers and joint parliamentary committees in order to determine a way to forge a proper balance of the Senate representing the regions of Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will recognize the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse) on a point of order. First, I want to ask if the Hon. Member is aware that the amendment in fact adds words to the amendment of the Member for Parry Sound—Muskoka (Mr. Darling). It does not delete anything. I think there has been some confusion because a document was circulated in the House which in fact deleted and would have made the amendment out of order.

The amendment that was proposed does in fact add words, and the Chair intends to rule it in order. The Chair is willing to hear the Member for Scarborough West.

Mr. Stackhouse: Mr. Speaker, I simply wanted to refer to the admissibility of the proposed subamendment. I submit with respect that it is contrary to the intent of Citation 438 of Beauchesne, that it enlarges upon the scope of the amendment proposed by the Hon. Member for Parry Sound—Muskoka (Mr. Darling). It indeed brings in foreign matter in so far as