

THE SENATE

APPOINTMENT OF EIGHT NEW SENATORS

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister and deals with his policy and position on Senate reform. The Prime Minister, in common with all Hon. Members, mandated a joint parliamentary committee to consider Senate reform. He must know that there is almost universal objection to the method of appointing Senators and to their term of office. Will the Minister explain how his appointment of eight new Senators for full terms, before the joint parliamentary committee reports, will advance the cause of Senate reform? I would like to remind the Prime Minister that there was almost unanimous support for an elected Senate, and that these appointments will cost the taxpayers millions of dollars.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will simply remind the Hon. Member that I have been seeking in this House, and in federal-provincial conferences, for the past 14 years, to reform the Senate, to reform its method of appointment. We proposed before this House in Bill C-60, in 1978 or 1979, a way in which the appointment of Senators would have been changed. It was the Hon. Member's Party which took the Bill to court to ensure that the federal Government, that the federal Parliament, could not change the method of appointment to the Senate. It was also that Party, the Conservative Party, which ensured that in the amendment of the Constitution the provinces would have to agree to amendments to the composition of the Senate.

These are two points, Mr. Speaker, for which that Party is responsible, and which will mean that in reality it will be a long while before we are able to make the reforms which this Government has advocated and which that Party opposed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosby: The Prime Minister cannot use technical points to deal with a matter of principle.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER DELAY MAKING FURTHER APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, the principle at issue is the reform of the Senate and how that is carried out, and the Prime Minister cannot contribute to that process by appointing Senators purely on partisan bases with no regard to the principles involved in the appointments. Will the Prime Minister at least undertake now that he has made these appointments, not to make any more appointments to the Senate until he hears from the parliamentary committee dealing with Senate reform? And will he abide by the recommendations of that committee?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member's own colleagues have summoned me in the past to fill those vacancies. They have said that there are too

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many vacancies and that they should be filled. As I explained in my first answer—what the Hon. Member called a technicality—I have attempted to ensure that the Senators would be named, not by the Government but by a process where the provinces would be involved. If the Hon. Member would look up Bill C-60 he will find that it is the Hon. Member's own Party once again which prevented that type of reform, or any other type of reform, from going through.

Mr. McDermid: The Supreme Court did.

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, it is the court, because that Party alleged—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Well, the Hon. Member could collect the views of his colleagues on this and try to make a presentation. Does he want the vacancies to be filled, or not? Does he want a reform, or not? If he wants a reform he will know that now we cannot bring in a reform. It has to be brought in in conjunction with the Provinces. I promise him that it would take a long long time before the provinces agree.

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● (1450)

MULTICULTURALISM

PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH RESEARCH CENTRES

Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State (Multiculturalism). On December 7, 1983, the Government promised a new Multiculturalism Act. Will the Minister indicate what type of consideration he is giving to the establishment of regional research and resource centre in either multiculturalism or comparative Canadian cultures, so that institutional structures would be in place to give multiculturalism in Canada more of a concrete, institutional, organizational presence?

Hon. D. M. Collette (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his question, of which he gave me notice yesterday. I would like to remind him that we in this Government have funded five chairs of ethnic studies at Canadian universities, and the list for such future chairs is growing. I am under great pressure to provide additional funds for that. We did rededicate ourselves to the cause of multiculturalism with a number of announcements in the Throne Speech, the best of which was the promise to bring in an Act very soon. I shall try to accommodate the Members very soon on that.

The specific suggestion is a very worth-while one, and one I am prepared to consider. I would like to remind the Hon. Member that in a number of areas we have improved our commitment to multiculturalism, not the least of which was the Prime Minister's recent appointments to the Senate.