

Senate Reform

the same number of seats that we have in each province. The greatest number of Senators that could be changed at any one time would be 12.

I went on to say:

With only one half elected in every provincial election, a maximum of 12 would change at any one time, if all Senators were defeated within that province, which is somewhat unlikely. There would be insured continuity.

That is what I said on May 17, 1985. To that extent, I agree with my hon. friend from Calgary North. As a private Member, who is not stating a Party position, I agree with some of the proposals made by the Hon. Member for Calgary North.

I do not know where he got his idea and if I happened to contribute to it, I am pleased to have done so. If we have similar ideas, that is even better. Perhaps we can start a movement.

The only difficulty I have with the proposal in the Hon. Member's motion is that for a short period of time there would be three and possibly four different kinds of Senators. There would be elected Senators, those appointed to finish the term until the next provincial election, the existing Senators and the so-called lifers, of which there are some six left.

However, like everything else, if we are going to reform the institution and want it to progress, perhaps that phasing in process would help to achieve Senate reform.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, it was with amazement, to say the least, that I listened to the speech made by the Hon. Member for LaSalle (Mr. Lanthier) in the House, that is the speech he has read, for it was prepared by God knows who. Yet, Mr. Speaker, that speech, delivered by the Member for LaSalle, but prepared by God knows who, was lacking something. First, the Hon. Member for LaSalle seems to have forgotten about his own party. We should remember that in 1979, the Conservative Party was elected in this country. Unfortunately, that government suffered from a specific deficiency; one could say that it suffered from several deficiencies because it has not survived for very long, but it suffered from a specific deficiency at that time, and that is the lack of representation from Quebec in the House of Commons.

Because of this particular problem, the Prime Minister found it difficult to fill Ministers positions in his Cabinet, due to the fact that there were only two Quebec Conservative Members. One of the two founding nations of this country was represented in the Cabinet by only two people or a maximum of two assuming that both would be appointed to the Cabinet. I think there was a serious deficiency there. To solve this problem, the Prime Minister decided to find in the Senate some high calibre Quebecers, who could represent Quebec well in the Cabinet, and he went and picked for example, the Hon. Member for Berthier—Maskinongé—Lanaudière (Mr. de Cotret) who was then a Senator. He picked a few others including Senator Asselin, and in that way the Prime Minister managed to give Quebec some representation, I would not say a fair representation because they were not in sufficient

number, but at least he managed to a certain extent to make up for this deficiency.

A little later, in 1980, the Liberal Government too had similar problems elsewhere in this country in the sense that Western Canada did not elect Liberal Members. So the then Prime Minister appointed Senators from the West to sit in the Cabinet.

This, I think, Mr. Speaker, clearly demonstrates the need for a Senate in Canada. But obviously, we must reform the present procedure for choosing Senators. There is definitely a need for improvement. Personally, I am sure that if Canadians had to decide right now how Senators should be chosen the Senate would be completely different from the one we have, in the sense that Senators would not be appointed for life. And I say this whether they are Liberal, Conservative or independent. The fact is that we need a higher Chamber in our Parliament.

• (1740)

[English]

Every single country in the western world that I know of has a bicameral national legislature. There is this chamber of sober second thought, be it in the United States of America, France, Great Britain or most other jurisdictions. There is a necessity for having that for two reasons; first, to ensure a continuity in one of the two legislative Chambers, and second, to give that sober second thought. I think, in spite of the disagreement of some of our New Democratic colleagues, that has a value. It does not mean that there has to be life permanence in order to have sober second thought. One could achieve that with less frequent elections, phased elections, and so on, in the way I have described and in the way the Hon. Member for Calgary North has suggested to us.

However, we cannot pretend we do not need it at all and have the kind of ridiculous proposition we saw over the weekend where the Quebec wing of the Conservative Party, for instance, decided we would abolish the Senate and the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) had to intervene in the debate and say: "Boys and girls, we cannot do this at the present time because that would contravene the Meech Lake Accord". So everyone said: "We cannot do that, but let us pretend we are going to do it at the next round of constitutional amendments". Their position was then revised. They would do it next time, not this time, and suddenly that made the project, in the view of certain Quebec Conservatives, a little more palatable.

Whether one wants to breach the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord or not in order to achieve this is, as far as I am concerned, not the right way to go about it. I think the idea proposed to us by the Hon. Member for Calgary North is a good one. Undoubtedly, it needs some work. Most ideas do, for that matter. But I think he has a far better idea than what was proposed to us by the Hon. Member for LaSalle (Mr. Lanthier).