

together and change their attitudes. The electoral system should not be altered merely to compensate for the weaknesses and strategic errors of political parties. However, we should note that one member of the Committee continues to favour proportional representation.

In addition, it is apparent that electoral systems based on proportional representation are complex. While they are not beyond the comprehension of Canadians, we are concerned about public reaction to an unfamiliar and even confusing electoral system — a system that was used at the provincial level in the cities of Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton beginning in the 1920s, but that was abandoned in the 1950s. Moreover, province-wide constituencies would not allow for regional representation within provinces; for example, almost all the senators elected from a province might come from the major urban areas, leaving rural areas unrepresented.

Some people suggested that we recommend the use in single-member constituencies of the alternative vote that is used for the Australian House of Representatives. They argued that such a system gives the voter an opportunity to express a sequence of preferences among the various candidates and political parties. It also results in the election of a candidate who enjoys the support of a majority of the votes cast, although those votes might not be all first preference votes. We considered the implications of using this system. We noted that it was used but subsequently discarded in three Canadian provinces; that if introduced now it would be unfamiliar to Canadian voters; and that experience shows that election results are only marginally different from those under the present system.

By contrast, the Committee found the present single-member plurality system simple and satisfactory. Voters are familiar with the system, having used it for generations to elect representatives to all levels of government, with a few exceptions. We see a real advantage in having the senatorial election system rest on the same principles as those governing election to the House of Commons, so as to avoid confusing voters about the existence within the federal Parliament of two opposing electoral systems. There are other advantages. Having smaller constituencies electing only one senator would facilitate election campaigns. Also, the chances of linguistic and cultural minorities within each region electing one or more of their members would be greater if constituency boundaries were drawn so as to permit such representation. The application of this principle should also facilitate the election of representatives of some of Canada's aboriginal peoples.

One of our major concerns is that the use of lists in large constituencies might increase the control that party headquarters have over candidate selection. The corrective measures suggested to us seemed inadequate. The use of lists could have amounted to nothing more than the veiled appointment of senators by political parties. On the other hand, with smaller single-member constituencies, local party workers would be in a better position to have their views prevail over those of central party authorities. This would meet one of our major objectives — to give senators a broader measure of independence.

We should not conclude these comments on alternative electoral systems without noting that we were urged by a number of witnesses to take a first-hand look at how