

*The Senate*

There is no question that today there is a tremendous amount of alienation in western Canada. I am sure you have heard on many occasions that our fellow Canadians out West do not feel they are really full partners in Confederation. They are and have been treated historically as second cousins. When times are good in the West, our wealth has been taken from us. There was the NEP. The previous speaker mentioned other historic cases such as during wartime where the prices of wheat and other grains were frozen, all to the betterment and advantage of the bulk of our population in central Canada. Having an equal Senate would ensure that those resource grabs will no longer occur. Western Canadians need that reassurance. It is one thing to have resources taken from you in the boom times, but in the down times we have a dickens of a job trying to get some assistance in the West.

The debate last week on the farm crisis is an illustration of the type of battle which has to occur in order to get back some of the wealth we lost in the boom times. When you survey the editorials of the eastern newspapers you find that they go on and on about how it is time that the farmers bit the bullet. They have to accept that we should have fewer farmers. These, Mr. Speaker, are fair weather friends. There are some people in central Canada who are quite willing to see great hunks of our farm population going under in these bad economic times. They are not willing to offer assistance to ensure that those farms remain viable so that when the price of wheat gets back up we will be functioning farm units.

Coming back to the question in front of us, I think an equal Senate would help in that regard. It is not a guarantee, but it is at least a step in the right direction so that all regions in this country are treated on an equal basis.

We then come to the third E, and that is effective. Again I have no problem with an effective Senate. There is work to be done by a second House. There is work to be done which will help contribute to wise legislation and wise governing of the country.

I am not certain about the final outcome of the conference at Meech Lake with respect to Senate reform. My initial reaction is that Senate reform will be frozen. In essence the patronage opportunity which used to belong to the governing Party on the federal level has now been transferred to the governing Parties in the provinces. Really we have replaced federal patronage with provincial patronage. As well, every province will now have a veto on Senate reform. That, I think, will make it extremely difficult to achieve Senate reform in the future. The First Ministers will be discussing Senate reform in the conferences ahead so we will know more about their attitude.

Whether the various provinces will be honest and prepared to see an effective and equal elected Senate remains to be seen. However, at this stage I feel somewhat pessimistic. I am not convinced that all the provinces will agree to Senate reform or forgo their new-found patronage opportunities and instead depend upon an elected Senate. That is why I was particularly surprised that the Premier of Alberta was not more forceful in trying to obtain a new agenda for Senate reform.

I accept and understand that the conference dealt primarily with obtaining some agreement to allow Quebec into the Constitution. I laud both the Government and the Premiers for their efforts and their accomplishments. However, I really had some fear that when it comes to Senate reform the agreement as it now stands will really not allow for genuine Senate reform. Certainly we do not have an elected Senate now. It will now be appointed by the provinces. We do not have an equal Senate because the distribution of Senate appointments remains as skewed as it was before, with central Canada appointing most of the Senators. We certainly do not have an agenda to allow for an effective Senate.

Again I am somewhat fearful that the way things are now we will not see genuine Senate reform in the very near future. Yet, as to the resolution in front of us, I am quite prepared to endorse it and support it and I congratulate the Hon. Member for Bow River for an excellent motion.

**Mr. John A. MacDougall (Timiskaming):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to take part in this debate this afternoon on the motion put forward by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor). Like my colleague, the Hon. Member for Calgary North (Mr. Gagnon), I have had the opportunity of working with the Hon. Member for Bow River since 1982. I certainly admire his dedication to the House and to his riding, and I appreciate the opportunity to be able to sit with him.

• (1740)

The motion calls for the abolition of the present Senate and its replacement by an elected Senate with equal representation for each province and territory. It also asks that intergovernmental consultations to this end commence at the earliest opportunity. The motion is certainly timely in light of the recent historic agreement reached by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Premiers at Meech Lake, Quebec, on April 30.

Calls for a directly elected Senate of some kind have grown significantly in recent years. In January, 1984, for example, a special joint committee of the House of Commons and Senate recommended a system of direct election which would give smaller provinces proportionately more Senators than populous provinces.

The joint committee also recommended that the Senate consist of 144 Members, with 24 Members each from Ontario and Quebec, 42 from the combined Atlantic provinces, 48 from the West, 4 from the Northwest Territories, and 2 from Yukon.

In March 1985, a Select Special Committee of the Alberta Legislative Assembly endorsed what has popularly become known as a Triple-E Senate, meaning direct election, equal representation by province, and effective powers. As the Alberta special committee argued, Canada needs an effective Upper House in order to protect the diverse interests of Canadians. The recommendations in that report were unanimously endorsed by the Alberta Legislature in May, 1985.