

Private Members' Business

There are problems with almost every system and rep by pop has its problems, particularly in a country where 90 per cent of the population lives within 50 miles of the American border in a huge geographic area. Further, a large portion of them live in the central part of the country because that is where the original development started before moving westward. There is an imbalance in the distribution and the needs of the people in the different regions.

We need in the Senate some kind of regional balance to provide control over the problems created by rep by pop. This might be a difficult concept for centralists but there is a growing number of regional concerns that the government and others do not address.

The Quebec referendum is a direct result of what happens when regional concerns are not addressed by Parliament. The number of senators has to be large. Two people represent states in the United States that have population bases as large or larger than this entire country. They do it quite happily with two people. I do not hear complaints from California, from Texas or from New York that they have the same number of senators as Rhode Island. I refute what the previous member from the Bloc Quebecois had to say.

Finally, we get to the third part, the effective part of triple E. The Senate must have sufficient powers to be able to provide a regional perspective and address regional problems created by legislation without being beholden to their patron.

A majority of the House, as was referred to by the member for Kingston and the Islands, is not necessarily a majority. A majority from the Liberal Party is the word of the Prime Minister. We have seen that with several bills already where some members in the Liberal Party had the audacity to vote according to the direction of their constituents and were thrown out of their committees for it. That is not a majority. It is not democracy. That is autocratic rule. That is what a Senate has to be able to overcome. A triple E Senate gives them the tools and the power to do that.

• (1420)

This creates a dilemma for members of the Liberal Party. I can understand that because they would lose this tremendous source of patronage appointments, a place to shove their friends and other people to whom they have obligations.

There was a vacancy for the chair on the board of referees in my riding. I heard through very good sources that the former assistant campaign manager of the Liberal candidate was being appointed to that position. In fact, he came to us and told us not to bother putting any names forward because he was getting it.

I raised the matter in the House and eventually it became a big issue. I certainly was talking about patronage. The individual was interviewed by the Vancouver *Sun* and was asked whether it

was a patronage appointment. When asked how he would respond to that, he said: "What is wrong with patronage? How else are we going to get anyone to join our party?" How else indeed.

I am not suggesting that all senators are not good. There are some good people in the Senate, but that is more from good luck than good management. I am simply pointing out that the Senate does not do the job most Canadians need and want it to do. There is an opportunity for us to start now with the triple E part by having elected people going to the Senate.

Let us start with an idea that does not need any constitutional change and then branch out from there. Before we know it, the place may even become fully democratic.

Ms. Judy Bethel (Edmonton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the private member's motion before us proposes changes to the powers of the Senate, the method of selecting senators and the number of senators by which the provinces are entitled to be represented in the Senate.

Clearly what needs to be understood here is that the third party is asking that there be constitutional change. If there is one thing which is absolutely clear, it is that Canadians have said they do not want constitutional change now. They want to focus on priorities. They do not want us to focus on constitutional change. They clearly expect, and rightfully so, for us to focus on their priorities which are jobs and economic growth.

The hon. member talks about regional problems, regional priorities and regional concerns. One thing we can be positive about is that all Canadians no matter where they live in Canada are concerned with jobs and economic growth. It is time to focus on exactly those.

The thing I find so difficult about this type of motion is that members of the third party had an opportunity to support exactly what this motion is asking for in the Charlottetown accord but they chose not to. They had their opportunity but instead chose political opportunism ahead of principle.

The Reform Party stated in Montreal on October 15 that it wanted to change federalism only through administrative agreements, not constitutional talks. Each of the 20 changes proposed by the Reform Party could be accomplished without comprehensive federal-provincial negotiations of the sort that led to the failed Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords.

What we are seeing here is an absolute flip-flop. The introduction of this motion shows once again the inconsistency of the Reform Party. It adopts policies based on which direction the wind is blowing at the time. Certainly the member must realize that her motion would require constitutional amendments. I ask: What will it be, constitutional amendments or Reform Party administrative agreements? The Reform Party must make up its mind. This is an incredibly inconsistent statement.