

Wednesday instead of late Thursday afternoon, more seats would be occupied.

● (1440)

[English]

This, perhaps, would not please the *Montreal Gazette* for, according to that paper, which is decidedly allergic to the Senate, an empty Senate would be easier to reform or abolish than would a full one.

But first we should define "senatorship," having first asked our honourable colleague Senator O'Leary whether he was serious or whether he was joking 30 years ago when he uttered this now famous sentence, "A senatorship is not a job; it is a title." What he did afterwards certainly does not fit with his definition, for he performed well and is still doing a fine job.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Miss Lapointe: For my part, I have been asked to come and work here, and the one who asked me to do so was not joking.

The trouble is that for many of us a senatorship is a part-time job, with the main occupation sometimes preventing a fuller dedication to the secondary one. This leads me to think that a mandate of about seven years, as was suggested by the Honourable Senator Manning, should be introduced, that mandate being renewable or not renewable by an impartial jury of honourable senators, according to the production and merits of the candidate. This would appear to me to be a logical and efficient way of maintaining a spirit of alertness among the recruits who, naturally, should be young enough to contemplate a second, third, and even a fourth active term of office.

Another of our shortcomings resides in the fact that the public—and here I am not only referring to the illiterate public; far from it—is kept amazingly unaware of the kind of work the Senate has to perform. We soon realize that that is the case when we are invited to address even a select audience.

[Translation]

Have we ever considered carrying out a discreet but effective campaign during which all of us would accept as many invitations as possible to speak about the Senate before social clubs and other important organizations, either early or late in the week?

And we all know that a single television exposure to tell the people about the Senate is worth more than 10,000 words! I have had this experience on a number of occasions and I must say that the people's reaction has always been more than sympathetic.

Would it not be possible either through interviews, panel discussions on radio or TV to inform Canadians of the usefulness of the Senate, what it is doing and what it could do, and to ask the public what they would like it to be? Moreover, why not suggest to our respective political organizations that one of us be invited once in a while to speak to the public within the scope of "The Nation's Business" or other such politically-oriented programs.

● (1450)

[English]

Apart from our own publicity, another role in which we are said to be notoriously bad, according to Senator Stanbury, is that of communicators with our constituencies. How right he is. Not five per cent of the Canadian people know the name of their senator. There are some notable exceptions, of course, adds Senator Stanbury, but he admits that most of us, including himself, have left the job of communication of government programs and relevant political activities to the members of Parliament and other elements of the party organization. For example, the policy of bilingualism could be explained perhaps more freely, in a more relaxed manner, by senators than by M.P.s, and some of our colleagues rightly suggested that.

It is true that every one of us—Liberals, Conservatives or Independents—could do much better about establishing some liaison with the people, in demystifying the image and function of a senator which is too closely linked with that of a millionaire playing golf or dozing in his red leather armchair. Another useful thing for the Senate to do would be to keep a monthly list of the commitments of every senator on outside duty. We generally ignore the whereabouts of our colleagues in that respect, and I feel that we should be kept informed of these activities. It would help us to counteract vicious propaganda.

[Translation]

With regard to the rules and procedure, I leave it to the parliamentary veterans to suggest changes which they deem appropriate. There was something, however, which was puzzling me—the debate just ended has partially replied to my question—the fact that topics for discussions are on the order paper for months and months without any further attention being paid to them. I was wondering if this was due to procrastination as Senator Croll once suggested or if such inertia was caused by the lack of preparation on the part of those who moved the adjournment of this or that debate. Either way, these items on the order paper or these notices of inquiry remaining many months in the Minutes of the Proceedings smell terribly of dust.

No doubt I will shock many by suggesting that time has come to drop the title of honourable which to the ears of an important segment of the population sounds a little too pompous and dignified, thus antagonizing many. What we would lose in prestige we would gain no doubt in popularity.

Another comment about an altogether different issue. So as to restore better balance between two languages, which is now tipped at least 90 per cent in favour of English, it would be advisable if French-speaking senators were to express themselves more often in French. I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the bilingual English-speaking senators for their occasional contribution and I add that such contribution is greatly appreciated.

I would also consider the possibility of holding more sittings during the same week, even if that meant a possibility of no sittings during the following week—which would save time and money.