

Supply

believe that the key for western Canada in the long run has to be in economic diversification.

Does the Member not think that perhaps the focus on Senate reform, institutional reform, will take away from the economic reforms which are needed in western Canada? How does he see the two relating? Does he not think perhaps that the emphasis should be on economic reform, economic diversification, using the tools which we presently have rather than focusing on institutional reform of the Senate?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I do not see economic reform and political reform as being contradictory. In fact, I see them as integral and connected parts of the same plan. The federal Government is a major reason for development in western Canada, and it has been historically from the time of the first railroads to the development of infrastructure programs, including highways, airports and others.

We are now into a new generation of reform which requires the federal Government to invest in science centres and research and development. It must provide the opportunity for western Canadians to become part of a new kind of economy based upon electronics, science, and various forms of high technology fields.

Unfortunately we in western Canada do not have the corporations to do that for us, aside from some of the big oil giants. Most of the economic base in western Canada is concentrated in small and medium-sized businesses. They do not have the resource capacity to have huge research laboratories. We do not have huge General Electric or General Motors plants in the west. Therefore, public sector investment has always provided that kind of support.

In order to make that happen there must be a clear willingness and ability by the federal Government to make those investments, to ensure that there is an equal distribution of procurement and investment in the scientific and technological facilities. There must be political will here in Ottawa to ensure that that takes place. I do not think that will exists, regardless of which Party is in power. We have one House comprised of seats based upon population. With the geography we have in Canada it is not always possible to ensure that there is equity in that system. That is why every other federal system has an effective second Chamber to ensure that there is balance in the distributional role of the federal Government.

I see the two as being very closely tied, as do most westerners. The matter was brought to a head with the CF-18 decision. There is no doubt that that had incredible importance in western eyes because they saw it as an unfair political decision against the proper and rational reasons why that major facility should have come west. They see it that way and they realize that those kinds of decisions are less likely to be taken if there is a second Chamber with elected and more equal representation to ensure that the political balance wheel is not out of whack.

We know that Senate reform is a long-term solution but it is symbolically very important for westerners to see that the rest

of Canada is prepared to respond to what they see as a major system of disadvantage at this time. We know that psychology and symbolism are very important in politics. I do not think any Member of this House wants to see the emergence of a western separatist party. We want to argue these issues out among national parties, but if the national parties are seen not to care over a period of time about one region of the country, that will provide the stimulus for a separatist movement to emerge. It would be tragic if that took place in this country. That is why I believe that an economic reform plan and a political reform plan must go hand in hand.

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Member read the editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on the Meech Lake Accord and what it does to the prospects of an elected equal Senate. Does he subscribe to that editorial? Would he give us his thoughts on what he thinks the Meech Lake Accord does to the prospect of an elected Senate?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, rather than referring to the editorial in the *Free Press*, which I do not normally treat as a source of my opinion, I refer the Hon. Member to the speech given by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) in this House during the debate. He said that when the exact language is put forward and we, hopefully, have the opportunity to have an active examination of it in this House, we will want to know whether the proposed amending formula, which in a sense provides for a unanimity principle, will provide a major blockade to the achievement of Senate reform.

I also raised the question of whether the proposal that the provincial Governments nominate Senate appointees may also provide a certain blockage. Once provincial Governments get used to the idea of having their own nominees it is less likely that they will be inspired by Senate reform based upon election.

Therefore, those items in the Accord must be very carefully examined. I want people who understand constitutional implications to appear before a committee of this House to give their expert opinion on whether the outcome will be as the *Free Press* predicts, that we would not have Senate reform if it proceeds. It is certainly a question which is in the mind of our caucus.

● (1210)

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I guess my initial reaction to reading this motion is one of amazement. I am absolutely amazed at the gall, the nerve of the socialist party, with the support of the Liberals, apparently, from the last speech, to make that kind of motion. Where have those Members been if they do not realize that whatever problems exist are the result of the policies and programs of the previous Government supported by the socialist party?

I have been around here for a while. I remember the summer of 1973 very well when David Lewis who was propping up the Trudeau minority Government said, "You had