

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**SENATE**

**Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, representation in the Senate should be equal from each province, elected by the people, and have sufficient power to make it effective in order to better represent the people of the less populous provinces.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me today to rise as the mover of Motion No. 459 and therefore to speak in favour of it.

Advocating a triple E Senate has been part of the platform of the Reform Party of Canada virtually from its inception. As Senate critic over the past year I have had the opportunity to research the Senate. Senate reform for the Reform Party and for all of us from the less populous provinces addresses a feeling of alienation from central Canada and the central government, which has grown through the last two decades.

This feeling of alienation stems from the reality that governments will respond positively to pressure exerted by the provinces or the regions that contain the largest portion of our population. Sometimes these policy responses are at the expense of the smaller provinces and their desires. Equality of representation of provinces in the second chamber of Canada's central Parliament we believe would give the people of the less populous provinces real clout over the policy agenda of the federal government.

However, I am getting ahead of myself. I would like to spend some time today talking about the original purpose of the Senate; in other words, why it was created. I would like to speak about how it has performed this role, then deal with the criticisms of the Senate and attempt to respond to them. I will then conclude with the reasons why I believe the triple E concept for the Senate makes a lot of sense.

The Senate was designed to perform two main functions, the review of legislation emanating from the lower House, and provide a forum wherein the regions would have a voice in the central Parliament's law making process. It was to provide an institutional voice to small governments and perhaps to minority groups against the popular majority of the lower house. One could say that it was designed to act as a political bridge between the component parts of the federation and the central government.

The work of the Senate as presently constituted in the scrutiny of legislation has been praised by most political commentators. Also, Senate committees have carried out useful investigative studies over the years, which have added new information to policy development. Yet criticism has been levelled against senators who have stayed in the post regardless of the fact that they may show up only once a year, some less often than that.

This criticism stems from the fact that senators used to be in for life. Also, because of undeserving patronage appointments Canadians have lost respect for the Senate, so much so that it has resulted in uncomplimentary names and references such as the old boys' club.

However, the main criticism of the role played by the Senate in our country concentrates on the inability of the institution to represent all regions. This has led to great frustration in western Canada predominately because there is a definite perception that central Canada, because of sheer numbers, sets and controls the public policy agenda.

Following on this argument is the feeling that senators, because they are not elected, have no legitimacy to act. Therefore, even if senators decided to start voting in regional or provincial blocs, they would not have the ultimate legitimacy to do so, in that they are not elected by the people of Canada. This is a strong reason for an elected Senate.

Bear in mind as well that our present Senate's powers are virtually equal to those of the House of Commons, except that while it can initiate legislation except money bills, it cannot hold up constitutional amendments for longer than 180 days. With these two exceptions, it is important to note that it can defeat, amend or indeed stall all legislation coming from the House of Commons. However, because of its lack of legitimacy its exercise of these powers is constantly subject to criticism. Therefore this lack of equality of representation and legitimacy to act to either defend or promote the interests of the smaller provinces has given great impetus to the movement of Senate reform.

• (1335)

While the impetus to a triple E Senate seems to have grown out of actions by the previous Liberal government to implement the national energy program, there have been other proposals for reform. Let us take a look at some.

The most popular subject for these proposals has been the method of selection of senators. Popular election, provincial government appointment and a mixed formula whereby half would be appointed and half elected have been proposed through the years. As early as 1908 Senator David suggested one third of the Senate chamber be named by the federal government, another third by the provincial government and the final third by universities and other public bodies.

A popular suggestion for reform in the 1970s was the creation of the house of the provinces. This second chamber would be made up of delegates appointed by the various provincial governments or perhaps provincial cabinet ministers. This was a second chamber modelled on what was then the West German upper house. While this reform had many supporters, especially among the provinces, it was obvious that this Senate could quickly evolve into a house of obstruction or a constitutionalized permanent federal-provincial conference. Neither scenario would have a long term positive effect on how the country is governed. Provincial interests only would be advanced in the