

duty as a House of sober second thought. It will be converted to a reading club.

Just as important is the provision in the resolution that if an amendment is made by the Senate and the amended Bill is returned to this House, this House will be given only 15 days to consider and agree to amendments before the Bill automatically goes to Royal Assent in the form in which it was first passed by the House. The clock starts ticking as soon as the amended Bill returns from the Senate. It starts ticking as soon as the message is received by Your Honour.

There would be no requirement for the Government to move concurrence. Therefore, if the Senate were to propose an amendment, we would be at the mercy of the House Leader, who could conceivably put it on the Order Paper and thus, with the stroke of a pen, simply ignore the views of Members of the other place and, most important, Members of this House who might want to speak on an amendment. The opportunity to comment on amendments proposed by the Senate would be lost. It would become constitutional closure of the House of Commons.

As well, the resolution states that this 15-day limit on any further debate or discussion applies, in the words of the resolution, whether or not Parliament is then in session. In other words, Members of the House of Commons will not have to be here to pass legislation. We could do it by default if the Senate amended a Bill and we did not have the opportunity to review Senate amendments. We would reject them automatically if we were not sitting or we would reject them automatically if the House Leader did not give us the opportunity to consider them.

Why have a Senate at all? That was my view at one time when I wrote a thesis on the subject. Then I found that it was constitutionally impossible to abolish the Senate because the provinces are intimately involved. That is why the bluff of the Prime Minister was so empty.

As long as we have a Senate, what Senator will spend any amount of time considering amendments that will improve legislation? Why would he or she even bother reading such legislation if there is so little chance that his or her amendment will ever see the light of day and that any changes will be acted upon by the House of Commons? What government Minister would bother going before the Senate any longer when all he or she would have to do is to allow the time to run out? Why should any Minister go before the Senate to defend and explain his or her legislation?

**Mr. Crosbie:** Because of our respect for them.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** I doubt that, and so does the Minister. I know that the Minister has a very sensitive feeling for the Senate, particularly for those three vacancies.

**Mr. Crosbie:** There is one from Newfoundland.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** Why would he bother appearing before the Senate? He and his colleagues would just have to wait 45 days and the Bill would become law.

### *The Constitution*

The amendment contained in the resolution would have another immediate consequence for the operation of Parliament. If the principle that what can be done will be done becomes the practice, constitutionally giving the Senate a 30-day suspensive veto on money Bills and a 45-day suspensive veto on non-money Bills, then the Senate would have the unchallengeable constitutional right to impose that delay on all legislation. I am not so sure that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice have really thought that matter through.

It should be noted that Bill C-11, the Appropriation Act which apparently prompted this ill-conceived resolution, was under consideration in the Senate for only 37 days. It was under consideration from January 22 to February 27, one week longer than the suspensive veto period. Now envisaged in the resolution and a considerably shorter period of time than the suspensive veto period of 45 days for non-money Bills.

In its haste to attack and emasculate the Senate, the Government is now saying that the Senate should have a suspensive veto of 30 days. It is saying that the reason that that is so necessary, the reason we must change the Constitution, the reason we must get all the Premiers to agree, the reason we must put aside the question of jobs, pensioners, the Budget and economic matters, the reason we must open with such urgency the question of Senate reform so inadequately dealt with in this resolution, is that the Senate held up Bill C-11 not for 365 days, not for 180 days, not even for 45 days but for 37 days. That is precisely seven days longer than the period of delay which is now to be constitutionally enshrined in the suspensive veto for money Bills. In other words, we are going to embark on a whole process of constitutional change because the Government was delayed for seven days in getting its way on a Bill. I think that is pathetic.

By reducing the Senate powers on all Bills to a suspensive veto, a Government will be able to extend its own life indefinitely in certain circumstances. Under the War Measures Act, 1914, a proclamation by the Governor in Council—

**Mr. Crosbie:** What twisted nonsense is this?

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** The Minister has not even thought these questions through in his obscene haste to get on the record books, to do the bidding of the Prime Minister and to seek revenge on certain of his Atlantic colleagues.

**Mr. Crosbie:** Whose legal advice are you taking, Nunziata's? Is he your constitutional expert?

**Mr. Nunziata:** I'm a little brighter than your sons.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** All right, now.

**Mr. Nunziata:** I passed law school, John, and you know it, the first time around.

**Mr. Crosbie:** I'm surprised that you creeped out of anywhere.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** You are still blinking your eyes in the light as well.