

Senate Reform

C-640 would have 62 provincially appointed Senators and 88 federally appointed regional Senators. Provincially appointed Senators could, of course, be elected Members of provincial Legislatures, indeed even Ministers.

I structured Bill C-640 prior to the patriation of the Constitution and before an amending formula was agreed upon. If I were doing it today, I would make several modifications. The first change I would make is to provide the Provinces with the right to recall their appointed Senators by a two-thirds vote of their Legislative Assembly. Second, I would use Alberta's suggested weighting formula of provincially appointed Senators, rather than 5 appointments by each province. Third, I would limit the total Senate to 125 Members, of which 62 would be provincially appointed and 63 federally appointed or regional Senators. Each of the five regions would then have 25 Senators. It would not be necessary to maintain the Atlantic region at 30 Senators with the new Constitution. The Atlantic region would have 14 provincial Senators and 11 federally appointed Senators. Both Ontario and Quebec regions would have 10 provincial appointments and 15 federal appointments. The Central region would have 18 provincial—Alberta 8, Manitoba 6, and Saskatchewan 4—appointments and seven federal appointments. The Pacific region would have ten provincial appointments that is, British Columbia, eight; Yukon, two provincial Senators, and fifteen federal appointments.

Such a mix would surely be more acceptable to the Provinces than the mix suggested in Bill C-640. I shall be following closely the meetings and hearings of the Joint Committee on Senate Structural Reform, and I trust that each Hon. Member of this House will also be following closely those meetings. I trust that many Hon. Members will read the report which my office has presented. I will make myself available to explain any part of it to any Hon. Member of this House. This is a topic, Mr. Speaker, which I can speak on for hours, but I see my time is up. I hope that other Hon. Members will participate in this debate.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, before I discuss some of the details of the Bill before us this afternoon, I would like to commend the Hon. Member for Edmonton East (Mr. Yurko) on his long-standing efforts to encourage public debate on Senate reform. He has acquired an in-depth knowledge of many of the intricacies associated with reform of the other place. He has demonstrated a grasp of the main issues to be addressed in Senate reform, and of the obstacles which may need to be overcome before it can be achieved. Moreover, he has done his best to expand the discussion on Senate reform, both among Hon. Members and among the general public. The Hon. Member for Edmonton East has been very dedicated on the subject. The Bill which we are discussing today was introduced in November, 1981, nearly a year and a half ago. At that time the Hon. Member circulated a few pages of explanatory notes about Bill C-640. That was a useful step, since I am sure many would agree that parts of this Bill are somewhat complex. A couple of weeks later, the Hon. Member presented a motion asking that a special joint

committee of both Houses be established to report on "structural reform of the Senate". This motion requested that the proposed Committee consider a number of reports on Senate reform published in recent years, along with the federal Government's Bill C-60 of 1978, and this Bill.

The Hon. Member's motion was debated on June 4, 1982, but was not adopted. However, he had a chance to present his ideas on Senate reform on that occasion, as did a number of others from all political Parties. Even though his motion was not adopted, he was not daunted. He published a concise article in the well respected journal "Policy Options" in September-October 1982. Last December, he circulated a detailed and, I feel, a useful study prepared by him and his research assistant. The study is called "Renewed Federalism: Structural Reform of the Canadian Senate". It contains a great deal of information on the history of Senate reform and on several major proposals for reform of the past several years. And, as we might expect, in that report Bill C-640 appears as the Hon. Member's recommendation for Senate reform. I was interested to hear today that he has other suggestions regarding the question of Senate reform which, perhaps are not reflected in Bill C-60. Nevertheless, his concern and his contribution to this question is certainly formidable.

As Hon. Members can see, the sponsor of today's Bill has become a determined advocate of Senate reform. While his own particular remedy may not be considered perfect, it has a number of good points. More important, perhaps, is the way in which he has stimulated a debate on Senate reform through the various efforts which I have described. These efforts have been timely. Last December, as we all know, the terms of reference of a Special Joint Committee were announced and agreed to by the House and by the other place. The Committee will soon begin its work. I hope that a public debate on Senate reform will ensue as a result of the appointment of this Committee and that a large number of Canadians will become involved in this very important question. The Hon. Member has helped to encourage such a debate and I hope he will continue his work as the Committee carries out its task.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, it would be useful to consider just why the Hon. Member has pursued the subject of Senate reform so assiduously. I know his sincerity is unquestioned, and I believe many Hon. Members would agree with his reasons for arguing that Senate reform should be seriously considered. When he spoke on his motion on June 4, 1982, the Hon. Member for Edmonton East pointed out that with patriation an amending formula was incorporated in the Canadian Constitution along with a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. He went on to say, "We must now take the reform process one step further". In his remarks that day, and on other occasions, he implied that this next stage in the reform process should involve an examination of our national political institutions. In the notes which he circulated with Bill C-640, he stated:

The fact is that reform of the Senate won't wait much longer. We have reached a point in our national development where we must make our institutions more responsive to every facet of Canadian society.

The Hon. Member's views on the phases through which constitutional reform might proceed accord with the feelings of