

Parole and Penitentiary Acts

Mr. Caccia: It has served the country well. If Canadians exert pressure on the Government of the day—on any Government—in favour of removal of the Senate, I am sure the Government of the day would pay attention to that. However, I am not aware of any such pressures being exerted on removing the merits of a non-elected Chamber which performs the role that our present Senate performs.

The Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) will deal in more detail with this particular matter.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has just confirmed his attitude that the Senate is a perfectly legitimate body even though it is non-elected. Does his view reflect the attitude of his Party?

Mr. Prud'homme: This is not a debate on the Senate.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand why the Hon. Member becomes so upset with the fact that there is a non-elected body which performs a legitimate role. There are many non-elected bodies in this country which perform legitimate roles and which serve the public purpose very well. One day he may see the light and recognize the importance of the Senate in our system.

Mr. Keeper: Is that the Liberal policy?

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, is the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) in favour of an elected Senate? If the Liberal Party were to come into power would it turn this situation around?

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I think the question of the Senate has been debated at length. It is something which will be debated for another 100 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time for questions and comments is now terminated. The Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria).

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-67, an Act to amend the Parole Act. In my view the first matter the House should address is why we are here this afternoon. Obviously, there are two schools of thought in this regard. I will outline them briefly. First, it is because of a strategy on the part of the Government, or because of its incompetence. It has nothing to do with the Senate. It has nothing to do with the Opposition. It has nothing to do with delaying tactics or any other issue. It is a government initiative, pure and simple.

Let me deal first with the issue of strategy. We know that the Tories are in trouble. Being the non-partisan person that you are, Mr. Speaker, I know that you have a full appreciation of the fact that the Tories are in serious trouble. They have fallen considerably in public opinion. Very few people will even admit today to voting Tory. Can you imagine that, Mr. Speaker? The odd person in the great riding of Glengarry—

Prescott—Russell may have voted Tory and more numerous people voted Tory elsewhere, unfortunately, but these people rarely admit to having done so. The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Carleton (Mr. Turner) who is sitting across the way knows that.

• (1710)

The Tories are in very serious trouble and we need only look at major newspapers to see that this is so. Just read the front page of this morning's *Globe and Mail*, Mr. Speaker. Need I enumerate the headings which describe some of the serious problems the Government is facing right now?

What is the Government's strategy? During recess, Governments usually tend to do better than the Opposition. When the House is in session, the Opposition holds the Government accountable, and that accountability process tends to weigh somewhat on the Government and tends to make the popularity and shine of the Government fade away somewhat. During recess when only cabinet Ministers and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) can get national coverage and make speeches and when there is no forum in which to have rebuttal from the Opposition, a Government usually looks better. This particular recess does not seem to be doing that for this Government.

What did the Tories do? They decided that although having the House in session is usually bad for the Government, it would actually be better than the present situation with scandals splashed across the front pages of newspapers. They decided to use this to take attention away from what we see in the newspapers. It may be that the Tories decided to recall Parliament as part of their strategy.

Perhaps you think some of the comments I am making are somewhat partisan, Mr. Speaker, as unlikely as that thought might be on your part. There is the odd Tory over there who thinks that way, so let me remind the House of an article in *The Gazette* of July 24 written by Don Braid who says that the recall of Parliament looks like a ploy to gain votes. I will read to the House some excerpts from the article. The article reads:

First of all, the government did—or at least the cabinet changed after Mulroney's June 30 shuffle.

That is when this whole business got started. The article goes on:

It immediately took on a more political look. This bunch is now ready to take advantage of any edge, including the public's fear of wandering criminal hordes.

Deputy Prime Minister Don Mazankowski said Tuesday that public pressure prompted the recall. There was a fear that inmates would be released "who might pose a threat to society."

NDP House Leader Ian Deans charged that Beatty caused this fear with "his attempt to create panic in the land by saying large numbers of unrepentant criminals were going to be charging around the streets murdering and pillaging."

In other words, the Tories created their own market for recall, and then produced the goods. The trouble is there's no evidence that the object of all this fuss—the notorious gang of 54—is worth the trouble.

The *Ottawa Citizen* revealed Wednesday that none of the 54 was convicted of murder, and that 38—

That was the other figure used by the previous Solicitor General. First he talked about 38 criminals to be released and