

*Senate Reform*

Mr. Speaker, we voted in Montreal in favour of putting the abolition of the Senate on the agenda of the next Meech Lake round of talks with the provinces. You may be assured, Mr. Speaker, that not only the issue of an elective or non elective Senate, but the very existence of that institution, is the subject of discussions in the province of Quebec.

The Senate reform has thus become more and more a matter of concern with Canadians in general and Quebecers in particular, and also with an increased number of Parliamentarians considering the number of resolutions tabled under our Standing Order 36. And there is nothing wrong with that, Mr. Speaker. Since in the name of democracy, we, in the House of Commons, an elected body, should neither be directed, nor impeded, or even delayed by, as our Prime Minister put it, a group of non elected Senators who feel nostalgia for power.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, there is every indication that Canadians will increasingly hear about the reform of our upper Chamber and that they will have to make decisions about that in the years to come.

Our colleague, the Hon. Member for Calgary-North (Mr. Gagnon), is proposing today that we decide on the advisability of amending our Constitution as it relates to the selection process of members of the Senate so that it becomes an elected Chamber. We can say right away, Mr. Speaker, that it would be a clear improvement. According to him, the senatorial elections would take place together with the provincial elections, and the Senators would sit during no longer than two legislatures in their respective provinces and not until they reach the maximum age of 75 years old as some who have sat for 40 years, completely cut off from the realities of life and knowing nothing outside the Parliament and the Senate here, in Ottawa.

For example, Mr. Speaker, I have myself had the opportunity to invite a Senator, the Senator of my region, to attend a symposium in my riding. And the Senator for the region whom I contacted admitted very candidly that he did not remember being Senator for my region. Nevertheless, he had been Senator for that region for five years.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, you can be sure that all Senators should be in closer touch with their constituency; they should at least have the decency to keep in touch with their constituents, even if they are appointed rather than elected.

In joining those who favour an elected Senate, the Hon. Member for Calgary North (Mr. Gagnon) is siding with an increasing number of Canadians, and probably with the majority of Albertans. He is therefore not the first, as you may well imagine, to define a specific proposal aimed at implementing the principle of an elected Senate.

Let us now look at some of the proposals which have been made over the years.

In 1981, the Canada West Foundation recommended that senatorial elections take place at the same time as every election of the House of Commons and that elected Senators

be allowed to hold office during two legislatures. To support this recommendation, here is what the Canada West Foundation stated, and I quote:

• (1730)

[English]

The reasons for considering direct election flow, not from any alleged tidal wave of democratization to which we must automatically yield, but from the practical and immediate implications of election. An individual who holds his position because he has been elected to that position has a clear and unambiguous mandate to represent those people who elected him . . . Election for a limited term implies a clear and direct accountability to those voters at the end of that term. The result of the combination of these two factors is legitimacy.

An elected Senator would possess a clear mandate for speaking out on behalf of his region, and a leverage for achieving concessions that would not rest on personality, fortuitous circumstances, or political convenience.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, this 1981 proposal also recommended that provinces get equal representation in the Senate. This, I believe, is the oldest proposal which people talk a lot about today. In another background study released in March 1987, the Canada West Foundation reiterated its proposal for a triple E Senate.

In 1983, the P.E.I. Government, then lead by a good Progressive Conservative Government, also proposed to elect the same number of senators from each province through a process similar to that used for members in the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, many people want an elected Senate and as many want the Senate simply abolished but everybody agrees that this old institution hinders the smooth running of the Government. I think this motion should be rejected.

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for putting an end to this speech.

I would also like to participate this afternoon in this debate on motion M-81 introduced by the Hon. Member for Calgary North (Mr. Gagnon).

[English]

I carefully read the proposal of the Hon. Member for Calgary North (Mr. Gagnon) in his motion. I must say that there are a number of measures which I can wholeheartedly support.

As a matter of fact, I would draw your attention to a speech that I made in the House on May 17, 1985. At that time we were talking about constitutional reform. Let me quote what I said at that time, as it appears at page 4890 of *Hansard*:

In order to reflect the principle that our Senate must represent provincial interests, I believe that Senators should be elected at provincial elections. While that may be a somewhat unusual way of proceeding, what better occasion is there to assess the provincial mood of an area than during the provincial election campaign? Why not elect one-half of the Senators at every provincial election, assuming that we had the same number of seats in the Senate that we have now in each province? I recognize that there has to be reform there. However, for the purpose of debate, let's assume that we have