

Oral Questions

Gentlemen:

There is a man in the post office so powerful that when he coughs the post office chokes.

Everyday, since 1982, this man has delivered a bag containing hundreds of pieces of mail to this company.

Last Monday he got sick. The bag of mail did not arrive. The next day I called the post office and after finally discovering a phone that somebody would answer, I got the whole story.

It goes like this. The post office is understaffed, so when our man gets sick our company doesn't get any mail unless a temporary replacement can be found. A few hours after my call, someone did drop off a few pieces of mail, but as at Wednesday at 2.30 p.m., the mail we should have received has not arrived.

Now it's not as if our offices are isolated in the middle of some northern tundra. We are located in the middle of downtown Toronto about two blocks from Maple Leaf Gardens (I guess Harold Ballard isn't getting his mail either).

Is there mail after death? I guess we'll find out soon enough because it's postal service like this that kills small business.

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HISTORIC EVENTS

SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

Mr. Speaker: Before proceeding with Oral Question Period, and although it is not normal for a Speaker to comment upon statements made in the House, I think it is in the interests of all Hon. Members and those Canadians watching to note the number of members who rose to speak of the great Canadian challenge and victory at Vimy.

I am deeply touched by what I have heard because my father, Clarence Rosswell Fraser, was a stretcher-bearer in the Canadian Corps in that great battle.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I am sure all Hon. Members of the House would associate themselves with the remarks you have just made on behalf of the Commons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

SENATE REFORM

PROVINCIAL PROPOSAL—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It concerns a very vital issue to western Canadians, that is, the issue of Senate reform.

As the Prime Minister will know, the Premier of Alberta has already declared in favour of a form of elected equal Senate. I think to the satisfaction of many of us, the Premier of Ontario has indicated that he is now prepared to consider such a proposal.

Could the Prime Minister indicate to the House whether he and his Government are also in favour of such a proposal and whether he intends to include or incorporate that topic as part of the forthcoming federal-provincial talks on the Constitution?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the latter part of the question, which I believe applied to the upcoming talks scheduled for April 30, it was agreed at the meeting of provincial First Ministers in Edmonton last year—and I believe it was chaired by Premier Getty—that the first round of constitutional discussions would relate exclusively, it is my understanding, to the attempted resolution to bring Quebec back into Confederation. After that, if that were to be successfully concluded, it was agreed that the federal Government would move on to other areas of concern to the provinces, including the question of Senate reform.

• (1420)

REQUEST FOR FEDERAL COMMITMENT TO INTRODUCE REFORM PROPOSALS

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was quoted as saying almost two years ago now that the Government which he heads would bring forward proposals on Senate reform before the end of its mandate which is now getting very close.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to commit today specifically that the Government will bring forward proposals dealing with a model or formula for an elected, equal Senate as part of the constitutional reform within the next 18 months?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I understand that today the Liberal Party of Canada expresses its support for an elected Senate with equal representation from all provinces. I understand that is quite at variance with the position of the Liberal Party of Canada in regard to the Senate adopted formally in 1983. I would like to point out to my hon. friend—

An Hon. Member: No, '87.

Mr. Mulroney: Yes, this is 1987. If this is the position of the Liberal Party in 1987, I know my hon. friend would want to rise and confirm that.

The commitment I gave to the country was for after we proceeded with these constitutional arrangements that I am sure all Parties are endeavouring to reach in regard to bringing Quebec back into the Constitution. Indeed, the First Ministers themselves set it out in a communiqué and, pursuant to that, I would be happy to meet with them hopefully at a mutually