

and that in the very area where the Leader of the Government in the Senate lives.

As for those who shape public opinion, they seldom give us their support. Going over the most recent newspaper clippings concerning the Senate, I was struck, once again unpleasantly, by the superciliously ironical tone of most of the thirty or some editorials which followed the resounding speech of Senator Croll. That acrimony was obviously not directed against him—for he must be, and was largely, congratulated for having belled the cat and having brought up the matter anew—but against the Senate generally.

Once more, my former journalist colleagues—mainly English-speaking—have used their acute sense of periphrasis to stigmatize in vitriolic terms the Upper Chamber and its occupants:

Politic infirmary, garbage dump, useless appendage, rubber stamp, undemocratic anachronism, old gentlemen's club, house of patronage and sinecure, constitutional aberration, lush pasture for old political war-horses, graceful way of cleaning deadwood from a P.M.'s cabinet,

and, finally, the least cruel and most sincere:

a featherbed secretly desired by many who criticize it.

As another reporter recently wrote:

The very intensity of these attacks seems to be an important element in the fashioning of a senatorial togetherness.

It is therefore as a reaction to those attacks and to try and correct—maybe more in surface than in depth—such a regrettable situation that I make these few remarks which I hope will be well taken by everyone.

As regards sitting attendance, it is to be regretted that some colleagues are behaving like school truants. Some come here just to have their name down on the book and disappear after 10 or 15 minutes, while others, for the same reason, arrive only at the end of the sittings. Also, some colleagues disappear for several weeks and are to be seen only on great occasions and justify their absence by explanations whose value or credibility stretches the imagination.

You can imagine what impression is felt by the public when only 20 to 25 senators are seen in attendance and sometimes as few as 12 or 13 during certain speeches, particularly when they threaten to be rather lengthy. The public can also see that quite often the rules of courtesy are violated when six or seven private conversations are taking place during a colleague's speech, and sometimes loudly enough to inconvenience the speaker. I admit with you that we do not all command the same degree of skill to hold the attention and that the matters discussed are not equally interesting. However, we should make an effort to be present, to remain silent and patient, to avoid falling asleep if only to show to visitors a better image than is traditionally linked with a dignified dozing old man.

It is indeed quite seldom that our sittings are unduly long. It even happens that they are rather too short and that they hardly justify the staging and trips which they require. This unfortunately can provide valid reasons for those who would rather not bother for so little.

[Hon. Miss Lapointe.]

Attendance at the meetings of the various standing committees sometimes leaves room for improvement. While the membership of each committee has been reduced to 20, several chairmen cannot rely on more than six or seven faithful participants, since the others are satisfied with seeing their name appear on the list as they never take part in the proceedings and are very seldom present.

Devotion to work is obviously related to the interest shown in the sittings of the Senate as well as those of the standing committees. Here is one example drawn from my own brief experience. In the Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, the inquiry on the parole system led to the presentation of more than 120 briefs, many of which were very informative although rather dry. They required hours of reading on the part of those who wished to ask relevant questions of the authors of those briefs subsequently called upon to give evidence before the committee. Too few members set their heart on doing that. It would be surprising if such failings never had to be deplored in other committees.

On another level, Senate members are invited to various provincial or national caucuses and to all special caucuses during which a minister states his policy on whatever bill he intends to introduce, or on such or such difficulties calling for advice or solutions. As a member of the Liberal party, I must say that, except for the Wednesday national Liberal caucus, where the Senate representation is usually satisfactory, senators seldom attend their provincial caucus—I refer to the Quebec caucus of course—or the special caucuses which, nevertheless, give plenty of first-hand information and allow us to understand the core of problems.

Contrarily to what the honourable member for Crowfoot, Jack Horner, said on January 26, when he recommended that no senator should have the right to take part in a caucus of any party, I believe the attendance at those caucuses, most of which since the advent of the minority government, have to take place from seven to eight and may last until nine o'clock, sets much sounder and much friendlier bonds with our colleagues of the other place who generally appreciate deeply our presence. I am in a position to realize that since I consider it a duty to attend those meetings as regularly as possible. Those meetings are a great help to newcomers, specially those who, like me, have no parliamentary experience, as they help them understand the bills to be introduced and make them aware of the numerous objections such bills may give rise to outside, as well as among the members. I believe indeed that it is wrong to act as if we were divorced when, on the contrary, anything that is done over there should concern us. Is the situation the same on the opposition side? If it is better in terms of attendance at meetings, we would be pleased to find out.

Another one of my remarks has to do with the meager attendance at the royal assent of bills, which is not too edifying and makes us the object of well deserved gibes. There again, in the name of a certain respect for decorum, several senators, particularly from Quebec and Ontario, could delay their departure by a few hours without in any way spoiling their long weekend. It is, however, obvious that if these ceremonies took place on either Tuesday or