

The Constitution

abolish it, let's do it today". What constitutional nonsense. He does not need my approval to begin with. He has a majority here. However, he certainly needs provincial approval and he knew that nothing I would say could elicit that approval. He was more interested in scoring political points when he should have been carrying this resolution in the House. He provided a few hearty laughs and a few flips of the fins of the trained seals on the Conservative benches. That was the only purpose of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): We thought he was joking, but this resolution shows that he was not. He fully intends to abolish the Senate indirectly, through the back door, by making it nothing more than a reading club. His only concern is that it be converted from a Liberal reading club to a Tory reading club. Then he had the audacity to hold out the promise of Senate reform to the Premiers in exchange for this little amendment now. I will be very interested to hear what the Premiers think they are going to get in return.

There has been a new style of Senate appointment introduced recently, Mr. Speaker. The provincial Member for Madawaska-Victoria announced the appointment of Jean Maurice Simard, the Minister of Public Service Reform in the Government of Premier Hatfield of New Brunswick. The Prime Minister's office had to issue a confirming statement that Mr. Simard will be appointed "at a later date". That is a new style of appointment to the Senate. It is on the instalment plan. Mr. Simard wanted that appointment because he does not know what will happen to Premier Hatfield. However, the time is not right because things are a little dicey in the legislature. When I was being introduced to the legislature of New Brunswick on Tuesday, the Premier was not present. He had not shown up since the report of the RCMP commissioner was introduced.

When will Mr. Simard be appointed? What is the delay? Who is choosing the date? Are we now awaiting the pleasure of Premier Hatfield? We know his Government is in trouble, but it is pushing it to be guaranteeing his Minister jobs in the Senate even before a provincial election is called. The people of Charlotte county are very pleased to know that Jean Maurice Simard is going to be their representative in the Senate because southern New Brunswick does not have a representative at the moment. However, that is another matter.

This resolution is not real reform of the Senate. It is nothing but a blatant power grab by the Government. It is an attempt to remove all impediments in the way of the Prime Minister and his office to have their own way. This is the new presidential style of the Prime Minister, replete with the seal. He is soon going to have a helicopter pad at 24 Sussex. This Government is going to go in style. It is really the Prime Minister's office and the bureaucracy who are setting the legislative agenda. I have great respect for the House Leader (Mr. Hnatyshyn), but we know where he gets his marching orders.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Yes, but my wife is in Saskatoon.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): They are coming from this highly centralized and manipulative Government. The Prime Minister wants to control his own Ministers, the media, and anyone else who dares stand in his way. The current target is the Senate under the flimsy excuse of Bill C-11. Giving our consent to this constitutional amendment would be tantamount to abandoning our responsibilities as elected Members of Parliament and turning that responsibility over to the Prime Minister's office. We intend to present further amendments to this motion in the event that the Government chooses to use its majority to override our proposal and that of the joint special committee of the Senate and House of Commons.

We also believe very strongly that constitutional amendments should properly be studied in committee before being presented to the House. Only in committee can there be the careful scrutiny and painstaking clause by clause analysis which is necessary. The Members of the Party I have the honour to represent in the House are in favour of reform. However, we do not agree with the style of resolution brought before the House. The constitutional conference should come first and now, if that is the agenda of the Government. These could then be a proposal and public discussion. There could then be consideration of views and a consensus reached. Meaningful and workable reform of the way this Parliament carries out the business of this country can and should be considered. We reject this fly-by-night meaningless resolution on constitutional questions.

For this reason I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan):

That the motion be amended by deleting the words "before the end of 1987" in paragraph one, and by inserting the following paragraph immediately after paragraph one:

"And whereas it is desirable that the proposal of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Senate Reform set forth in its report of January 1984, that Senators be selected by election, be considered by a constitutional conference before the end of 1985:"

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have received the amendment of the right hon. gentleman. I would like to reserve my decision on it and carry on with debate.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. President of the Privy Council (Mr. Hnatyshyn) on a point of order.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Under Standing Order 35(1), I think it is appropriate to have a brief question and comment period at the end of the remarks of the right hon. gentleman. I wonder whether it would be possible for me to question the right hon. Member?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I have no objection to that, but I think the understanding was that I would not question the Minister. That was the deal, unless you want to bring him back in.