

The Senate

rowing authority if such a request is not supported by a budget or by main estimates for the period for which the borrowing authority is being requested.

This message of caution was conveyed to the Government by all senators, including Conservative senators, who said that the Government did not show respect for traditions. Conservative and Liberal senators in the other place said that this was a case of tyranny by the majority. They chose to exercise their powers under the Constitution, precisely to prevent such tyranny by the majority. Perhaps such are the principles endorsed by—

[*English*]

—small “c” conservatives—

[*Translation*]

—as Senator Bosa put it, but the minority must be protected.

The Government may have a strong majority and may be facing a reduced Opposition, reduced in number and not necessarily in quality, Mr. Speaker, but I find them rather ridiculous to be put off and frustrated to the extent that what they decide as a Party must become reality, that they must get rid of any potential opposition, particularly the Senate which happens to be the only Chamber in Canada capable of standing up to the Government now and then and bring it back to its senses.

The Secretary of State gave us a good example today, Mr. Speaker. He cannot stand any kind of opposition. The Secretary of State took revenge on the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) and fired her mother who was guilty of upholding the rights of the minority. That is telling us something, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the Hon. Member rising on a point of order?

Mr. Côté (Lac-Saint-Jean): On a point of order. The Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre) just mentioned that the Secretary of State fired the mother of the Hon. Member for Hamilton East.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry but that is not a point of order. A point of order would have been that the Hon. Member's comments were not relevant, but I made it clear to the Hon. Member that he should speak to the motion and I think he understood.

Mr. Lapierre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we hit a sore spot.

What the Hon. Member is proposing today is a constitutional conference. I realize she is new to the House of Commons and may not have had an opportunity to read the 1981 version of our Constitution, since otherwise she would have known she does not need a constitutional conference if her Party has any political will.

According to Section 46(1) of the new Constitution, the amending procedures provided under Sections 38, 41, 42 and 43 may be initiated by the Senate, the House of Commons or a legislative assembly. Thus, Mr. Speaker, such procedures may be initiated by the House of Commons. Today, the Hon. Member is suggesting that we try to accomplish everything in one fell swoop, and she ought to realize that past attempts to reform the Senate have been fruitless.

Mr. Speaker, I remember a number of discussions, including several on the Committee on the Constitution, about the Senate's veto powers, and I must admit I was opposed to the idea. I even made some rather impetuous remarks at the time, and do you know who voted massively in favour of veto powers for the Senate? Our hon. friends opposite, when they were on the Opposition side. I remember the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) when he was extolling the virtues of the Senate and the fact that the Senate had veto powers. He was on the same committee as I was, Mr. Speaker. Now they are on the other side of the House and are worried about opposition anywhere in Canada, they have decided to create a diversion by talking about Senate reform.

Mr. Speaker, I think if this Government intends to propose some kind of reform and it has any political will and is not just acting out of a spirit of revenge or on the spur of the moment or out of frustration, if it has the political will to propose some changes in the powers of the Senate, we would welcome such proposals. After all, the true reformers in this House are in this Party. In the past we have shown our determination to reform the Senate. We would be delighted to consider a Bill or a draft resolution, to examine all the details of a draft resolution that would give the Senate powers that differ from the ones it has now. However, this does not mean the Upper House should become strictly a rubber stamp for the House of Commons.

• (1730)

The Hon. Member said there should be non-partisan appointments, and so forth. That is all very well. We are all for virtue and motherhood, Mr. Speaker. But she will have to persuade her own leader to make non-partisan appointments. We have a list of the Senators who have been appointed since this Government came to power, and I must say their curriculum vitae are most eloquent, especially where they enumerate services rendered to the Progressive Conservative Party. That is why I think the Hon. Member either did not see this list or else she is being totally unrealistic. Actually, her own leader gave the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) a bit of a dressing down when he told him the reason he did not understand why the Senate was important was that he was not the Prime Minister. That should have been some indication to the Hon. Member that her leader did not intend to carry out a reform. What he does intend to do is to change the balance as soon as there is a vacancy and to replace a Liberal with a Conservative.