

do their job because they are not there. It should be made a more lively and interesting place than it obviously is now. That kind of life thrown into the Senate might make it possible for it to be televised. You might find somebody who wants to televise it.

Those are the kinds of reforms I would like to see involved with the Senate. As I said, some of these reforms require legislation. Some just require action on the part of Government, some by the Senate themselves and some with the consent of the provinces. This brings me to the point of the necessity of calling a constitutional conference.

Because of the interest that the provinces have shown in this issue and the concern they have, it is important to involve them in the changes that we are going to be putting forward. What better way than calling a constitutional conference? It does not have to be an expensive, fancy thing. It is a matter of bringing together the Premiers and their designates to talk about this issue, to give them a chance to put their views forward and have a thorough public understanding of the proposals that we are making. It is also consistent with the kind of consultative and co-operative approach that this Government is undertaking with the provinces and the people of Canada.

Let me just summarize my points. First, the time has passed for study. We have had lots of them. What we need now is action. Recent events have reminded us that changes are required. As a Conservative, my inclination is and my recommendations are that we should make these basic kinds of reforms, test them, see if they work and ensure that they will maintain the primacy of this House and enable new life and new vitality to be felt in the other place.

My plan of action includes legislation to be introduced to curtail the powers of the Senate, to provide limited terms of appointment, to provide for their right to review regulations, to introduce practices, to encourage Bills to go to the Senate, to invite them in joint task forces, to have Bills sometimes go there before being debated here so that they have time to study them, to ensure that appointments are made of people who will truly contribute and reflect minority views in this country and understand regional concerns, to call a constitutional conference and to ask the Senate to look at itself, to become less partisan and more hardworking and get out and do a little public relations work.

I echo the sentiments of Senator Bosa, who said that Canadians are basically small "C" conservatives. I believe they would prefer and would support a moderate approach to the reform of the Senate. After sober second thought, so do I. We must take care as well that our system of Government does not become too complex and too weighty so that the people of Canada do not understand, and that we lose a sense of accountability. It not only costs more to have a complex system, but there is a loss of public understanding. As Alexander Pope said:

For Forms of government, let fools contest, Whate'er is best administered is best.

Hon. Members, I ask for your support here in this House, to join together from all Parties with our colleagues in the

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provinces, with our friends in the other place, to make the kinds of reform and kinds of improvements which will serve the interests of all Canadians.

● (1720)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Hon. Member on her knowledgeable remarks to the House and tell her that, hopefully, the sentiments she expressed before her colleagues are shared by the members of her own political party. She ought to consult the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and explain to him how she envisages the Senate reform, for he seems to be taking this issue rather lightly. He is just bluffing, but I know that the Hon. Member takes it a lot more seriously than her leader does, and I expect she will impress on him the importance of Senate reform.

Mr. Speaker, I find it rather interesting that Hon. Members opposite would raise the issue of Senate reform precisely when, for once, the Senate exercised its prerogatives. As Lord Acton once said: If power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, this Government was elected with an overwhelming majority—211 Members—but it has been slightly put off by a responsible Senate, that has been frustrated as the Hon. Member is, so it chose to show off for the galleries. Looking very pleased with himself, the Prime Minister rose in the House and said: We can abolish the Senate first thing tomorrow morning. The day after, of course, on second thought and—

[*English*]

—sober second thought—

[*Translation*]

—he realized that his joke was not funny at all and that his provincial colleagues were beginning to get impatient with him. Senate reform is much too important to make jokes about it in the House of Commons, they said.

Mr. Speaker, why would the Hon. Member take the floor today to advocate Senate reform? Because, in recent weeks, the Senate has played its true role. The Senate told this political Party and this Government: There are rules and a parliamentary principle which must be respected, a very simple principle whereby the Government should have sought borrowing authority after tabling the estimates.

I should think that is not expecting too much from the senators and the House. The Hon. Member said earlier that it was sheer partisanship, but I would suggest that the senators acted with utmost impartiality.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Senate Standing Committee on National Finance reported—unanimously, so Conservative Party spokesmen were in agreement—and recommended that the Senate remain reluctant to approve any request for bor-