

In the individual family, career and political decisions which we take week after week, we would never sign contracts or agreements on the basis of such a dearth of information as we have about this package. The lawyers are literally still drafting the details.

I ask myself this question: Are we being fair with this generation and the generations to come by approving this process of constitution building through exhaustion, rushing through Parliament a set of infinitely critical proposals so that arbitrarily established political deadlines may be met?

At some point in the process, may I express the fervent personal hope that a free vote will be declared, allowing all members of all parties to vote according to conscience. The future of this nation is more important than politics and there are moral issues involved in deciding the future of this country, just as important issues as capital punishment or abortion and other "conscience" issues where free votes are permitted. Indeed, some of the package's proposals are severely flawed.

Will there be a reformed Senate? The proposed Senate is nothing like the long sought-after Triple-E model. The major proposals for Senate and Commons changes fall short of what they should be, so much so that if possible an attempt should be made to improve and change them for the sake of the country and the future before they are enacted into law. Where is the Senate-inspired idea for election by proportional representation to help assure that a greater range of dissident voices can be heard? The premiers did not like it so they pulled it out.

Many of us had hoped that half of the senators would be elected between general elections or at specified fixed intervals to keep a government more conscience of its commitment to the people of the country. The premiers said they did not like it. The premiers rejected the concept and they have recommended that Senate elections be held at the same time as general elections, thus minimizing the ability of citizens to censure governments.

The premiers did not like the proposal for an effective suspensive veto for the Senate, so it was kicked out, too. Why not a six, eight or twelve month suspensive veto to allow time to mobilize regional views and concerns about possibly bad legislation?

There are no plans to make the Senate less political, as many committees have suggested. The premiers did not like it. Why not a Senate which would permit those of all parties to work effectively and cooperate freely in efforts to serve the great regions of this country? Abandoned are proposals to have the Senate act as a check on an excessively powerful executive. The premiers did not like it.

The number of senators will be reduced from 104 to 62. The premiers said, "We want to save money". Then in a *volte face*, they proposed an increase in the number of members of the House of Commons by 36.

[Senator Perrault.]

Is it too outrageous to suggest that at some point in our history there should be a reduction in the ratio between the Senate and the House of Commons from, say, 337 to 62 senators to 240 in the Commons to the same 62 in the Senate? It would save almost \$100 million a year. Proportionately, we have far more members in Canada between the Senate and House of Commons than they do in the Congress of the United States.

When are we to start saving taxpayers some money? At the same time, we could improve the opportunity for the new Senate to play a real role in determining the fate of legislation by establishing a ratio which would at least admit the possibility, once in a while, of the Senate winning a vote.

One can only conclude that the premiers and the present Prime Minister prefer a weakened Senate. Indeed, three of the premiers are members of a party which for years has called for the abolition of the Senate. A former leader of the NDP of British Columbia said the other day, "Sure it may be weaker but I have always wanted to kick at the Senate anyway, so I guess it is a move in the right direction." On the other hand, we are told by the government apologists that this is an effort to create a dynamic new Senate, for heaven's sakes. They know better.

Canada's premiers may have certain policy differences but like their predecessors down through the nation's history, they hold steadfastly to the belief that they are the only legitimate spokesmen for the regions. I say it is a lie.

Obviously this latest group of premiers is not about to create a new and reinvigorated Senate which might serve to challenge that discredited myth. The new reformed Senate would be elected but only in certain provinces. Mr. Getty, that famous quarterback from years back—he will be premier for a while yet—said that we now have a Triple-E Senate that we have won on all counts. What about the sacred principle of an elected Senate? Some premiers are said to be considering the attractive option of appointing senators through their legislatures. In effect, some are saying, "We may appoint ours."

One premier, Mr. Bourassa, has jettisoned the idea of direct election of senators and he has declared that Quebec intends to appoint its senators through its legislature. The first ministers' revised version of Senate reform would permit an unelected chamber in at least one province and would allow senators to be chosen in various ways.

The new Senate would not be equal in any kind of regional sense. An equal Senate would be created but only in a narrow, nominal fashion. Unless major changes are made, it would not be effective. May I say that I help to speak for the province of British Columbia, which is the third largest province in the Confederation, the most rapidly expanding province, and I am proud of that. I know my other Senate colleagues — Senator Carney, Senator Lawson and Senator Marchand and Senator Austin— are equally proud of our great province. However, there is real anger on the West Coast.

In order to achieve so-called equality in the number of senators per province and to "compensate" central Canada for its