

Senate Reform

it is important for all the regions to be represented in Cabinet even if there does not happen to be an elected person in this House from a particular province. A province deserves to be represented in government nevertheless.

Mr. Holtmann: Rent a Minister.

Mr. Boudria: The Hon. Member said "rent a Minister". I had nothing to do with the appointment of the now President of the Treasury Board to the Senate at that time. Perhaps he would like to discuss with the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) why that individual was appointed—

Mr. Holtmann: Remember 1980.

Mr. Boudria:—which is fine with me. The Member on the other side could bring that up with the appropriate Minister at his leisure somewhere behind the curtains. Notwithstanding that, I for one think it is important for all provinces to be represented in Cabinet. If we have achieved a consensus here today that every province deserves to be represented in Cabinet, then I think we have accomplished something. If the Hon. Member disagrees with that, perhaps he can tell us later that some provinces do not need to be represented in Cabinet, if that is his view.

Mr. Holtmann: I did not say that.

Mr. Boudria: In the last week I received a letter from a constituent. It is rather interesting. It is dated March 8, 1985 and reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Boudria.

This sudden resolve of the Tory Government to abolish the Senate is one of the fastest about-turns we've seen lately. It is also entirely unacceptable. The Liberal Party must never allow the Canadian Parliamentary system to be mutilated in this way. The Senate must remain. A one-House Parliamentary system constitutes a serious threat to Canadian democracy.

The Senate does however, need a great deal of reform. An elected Senate, representative of the various regions of Canada, is a very attractive alternative to the present House structure—

With a House of Commons so heavily loaded with one Party, it should be obvious a strong Senate is absolutely required to balance the system.

An Hon. Member: Who wrote the letter? Your mother?

Mr. Boudria: My constituent who wrote this letter will, of course, get a copy of this *Hansard*, which will include the heckling from the Member who just made that remark. Perhaps it will be useful to assist that constituent in her decision as to whom she is going to vote for in the next election.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Boudria: Perhaps some of the Conservative Members do not take this issue seriously, but I think the Member who moved the motion today does. I would like to commend him for the seriousness he gave the topic. I think his exposé was far more representative of how the Canadian people feel than the one I heard the other day when we participated in a similar debate.

I am of the view that the Senate should be elected. I think we should move in that direction. Whenever a Senate position

becomes vacant, the position should then be filled by way of election.

One would ask how this could be done at the present time while trying to represent the views of a region or a province in our Canadian parliamentary system. My view is that we should elect Senators at provincial elections. The Province of Ontario, which is the province I have the pleasure and honour to represent in this House, has 24 Senate places. Assuming we use the present system of 24 Senators for Ontario, we should elect half of the Senators at every provincial election. That would ensure continuity in the Senate. In other words, there could never be any more than 12 Senators changing at one time, assuming that every single one would be defeated, which is somewhat unlikely. Using that assumption, that would be the greatest transformation of the Senate at any particular time. If we elected Senators every second election, or half of them every election, which is what I am really saying, we would have a situation whereby Senators would be elected every six years. I remind the House that that is quite similar to the American system.

● (1640)

Let us take the average term in provincial legislatures across the country. It is roughly three years. They have five-year terms, as is the case here, but provincial legislatures tend to have elections somewhat more frequently. I think they average roughly three years. If we average out the situation in the federal House, it is not much higher. In any event, we would have a situation whereby members of the upper House would be elected every six years.

The Hon. Member who proposed this motion said that electing Senators on a province-wide basis would be difficult. I tend to agree with him. We should divide each province into electoral districts for the Senate, in a way which would not be totally dissimilar to the situation in Quebec. As we know, Senators from Quebec represent electoral districts based upon the old system of *seigneuries*. Of course, that would have to be amended to reflect more clearly population distribution within the particular province, but it would be a good system with which to start.

I feel this begs another question: How would one ensure that the Senate has a federal tone to it in any way, shape or form? Hypothetically, under this system people could elect only PQ Senators from Quebec, which could make it rather difficult to work with the Senate. That would have been the case, especially at the time that provincial Government was elected in 1976. To avoid that, a Party would have to have a minimum number of seats in the House of Commons before being eligible to have candidates for the Senate. For example, it could be 10 seats in the House or some such formula. It would ensure that Parties represented in the House of Commons could run candidates for the Senate, but because the Senators would be elected in provincial elections across the country, the mood of the people of a particular province, when they voted at the provincial level, would be reflected in their election of Senators.