

THE SENATE

Wednesday, September 16, 1992

The Senate met at 2 p.m., Senator Gérald J. Comeau, Acting Speaker, in the Chair.

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

GENERAL ELECTION

NUMBER OF DAYS LEFT IN CURRENT TERM

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the election clock is still ticking as expected. Democracy lovers have 65 days; those cowards contemptuous of democracy, 451 days.

THE CONSTITUTION

CHARLOTTETOWN ACCORD—GENDER ALLOCATION OF SENATE SEATS

Hon. Pat Carney: Honourable senators, 62 years ago, Ottawa housewife and welfare worker Cairine Reay Wilson became the first Canadian woman to be called to the Senate of Canada. She won that distinction because five Canadian women had won from Britain's Privy Council a legal admission that women were "persons" and thus eligible for Senate appointment.

The move by some premiers to allocate elected Senate seats by gender in their provinces under the proposed Charlottetown accord would deny women that historic and hard-earned right to be considered persons. The move would not only negate history, it would fetter the future for Canadian women seeking political office for the following reasons:

1. It establishes a quota system which is unfair to women, restricting their participation to a predetermined number of seats regardless of the merit of women candidates in the future.

2. It confines women to the "women's quarters", limiting them to so-called "women's issues" rather than encouraging them to tackle the hard-core economic and social issues which challenge our society.

3. It is demeaning to women, conveying the notion that women can attain political office only on the basis of their sex, not their merit, thus reinforcing the stereotypes of the women's "place" in society.

4. It emphasizes the difference between men and women at a time when we need to stress those common concerns which should unify us. At least, says a B.C. feminist, violence against women will be discussed in the Senate, ignoring the fact that this issue involves men as well as women.

5. It does not deal with the real barriers to women's participation in both the private and the public sector, which are the corporate culture and attitudes which require a thorough change if women are to feel comfortable balancing work and family responsibilities.

6. It treats women as a "minority" which requires protection at a time when women form the majority of the Canadian population and will, in this decade, make up the majority of the Canadian workforce and graduates of post-secondary institutions.

7. It restricts voters' democratic rights, won over centuries, to choose the "best person" from among our peers to make and enforce the rules we live by.

8. It particularly restricts the rights of westerners who are being asked to approve a major expansion of House of Commons seats to Central Canada—without sexual quotas—in return for Senate seats allocated by sex.

9. It ignores the possibility that better methods can be employed to increase the participation by women by encouraging political parties to seek out, nominate and elect more women candidates.

10. It is insulting to ask women and men to stand for office on the basis of their genitals, not their ability to make a contribution to our country. No Canadian should be elected to the Senate on that basis.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ELEVENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED AND PRINTED AS APPENDIX TO MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Noel A. Kinsella: Honourable senators, I have the honour to present the Eleventh Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology respecting its examination of the subject matter of Bill C-86, to amend the Immigration Act and other acts in consequence thereof.

I ask that the report be printed as an appendix to the *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Senate* of this day, and that it form part of the permanent record of this House.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, is it agreed that this report be printed as an appendix?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.