

administration and direction of the province. Moreover, the Fathers of Confederation had already designated the Canadian Senate as the protector of minorities and regional interests in Canada and thus in this manner the Legislative Council was a duplication.

● (1610)

Subject to what I have said until now in this debate, generally speaking I agree with the comments of Senators Hicks and Forsey and I shall go even further than the latter who suggests that a change in the Constitution, and in the duties of this house could not take place without a prolonged consultation with the provinces, and perhaps only with their unanimous consent, because I believe that the unanimous consent of the provinces is absolutely necessary before the Parliament of Canada can implement such changes.

I also agree with most of the remarks contained in the excellent speech made by Senator Connolly. I agree entirely with him that at the beginning, when the Canadian Senate was established, it was somewhat a half-way proposition between the hereditary House of Great Britain or the House of Lords and the elective Senate of the United States. As it happened for the Senate in this country, our existence has also been, from a constitutional point of view, the result of a compromise between the situation prevailing in North America and more especially in Great Britain.

With Senator Connolly I think that our parliamentary system can be reformed to meet new conditions. With him I hope that we will be wise enough in our young developing country and that we will make a point of preserving its essential features, because our parliamentary system has been tested and it has shown beyond the shadow of a doubt its adaptability and usefulness.

I was also greatly impressed with the moderate and constructive statement of our colleague, senator McIlraith. His comments were impregnated with his lengthy parliamentary experience and it deserves the attention of all of us who are interested in the efficient operation of our parliamentary system.

Honourable senators, I have not enough time to comment on the fine contributions of our other colleagues who took part in this debate. I shall merely make one last comment on the proposal to the effect that some arrangements ought to be made to prevent the considerable loss of time suffered by our colleagues living at both ends of our country, those from British Columbia in particular who have to travel between Ottawa and their home every week while this house is sitting. I feel deeply for these colleagues. I realize and appreciate perfectly the hardships they suffer in order to perform adequately their duties in this house. However, I anticipate a great number of difficulties in the implementation of the proposal to schedule the sittings of this house so as to reduce the amount of travelling required of these senators. In order to do this, this house should have complete control over the flow of legislation brought before us, and since the Senate does not have such control, it is impossible for it to schedule its sittings so as to accommodate the senators living outside Ottawa, while enabling this house to fulfil its constitutional responsibility to consider as required the legislation sent to it. However, I think that this suggestion deserves

[Hon. Mr. Langlois.]

consideration so as to find a compromise solution which, if not doing away completely with the present inconveniences, might alleviate them to a large extent.

In concluding, honourable senators—I have already spoken too long—I submit that it is rather the responsibility of this house to initiate its own reform, by adjusting better to the new circumstances under which it must operate, to the changing needs resulting from our rapidly expanding country, as well as to the vocation it has assumed both at the national and international level.

This reform from inside can be carried out right now or gradually, smoothly and without confrontation, through the improvement of our ways and means, as well as the addition of new activities coming under the domain of the Senate within the Canadian parliamentary system.

We might easily "*de proprio motu*" initiate studies on new formulas, whether in the social, economic, human or political fields, so as to elaborate original solutions to the problems which the various areas of our country and the various classes of our society have to face.

I think that this chamber can also greatly contribute to a climate of understanding and co-operation between our levels of government in the field of federal-provincial relations, while maintaining, through our studies and activities, public awareness of the need for a truly nationwide dialogue.

Concerning some of the other reform objectives which can be attained from the outside, such as improving the representation of ethnic groups and political parties in the Senate, they can also be achieved without friction and debates of a partisan nature, and without acrimony, simply by way of a statement of policy on the part of the government in office to the effect that henceforth the Prime Minister of Canada will consult, for instance, either the provincial Premiers, or the Leader of the Official Opposition in the House of Commons, or for that matter organizations representing ethnic groups, before recommending to the Governor General the appointment of a certain percentage of nominees to the Canadian Senate.

Such a method of reforming the Senate along those lines could be adopted without the Prime Minister of Canada having to abdicate for evermore in any way his unquestionable right of recommending appointments to the Senate to the Governor General, just as the Minister of Justice, for instance, does not abdicate his ministerial duties when he consults either judges or lawyers before appointing new judges.

Once this new appointment policy for Senate members has been consecrated by time and constant usage, it would become an intrinsic part of our Canadian parliamentary system.

It has often been said that the best constitutions were never written; however, nothing will prevent a government, if it so wishes, to incorporate this new policy in the text of the Canadian Constitution itself and to add, if the political situation at the time makes it possible, other Senate reform objectives which require one or several amendments to the Constitution.

Our attempts at constitutional reform up till now have proven that it is extremely difficult to obtain a consensus on any amendment of the present text of our Constitution.