

It is also argued that the provincial legislatures should not be involved in federal legislation. Senators chosen by provincial legislatures would be oriented toward matters germane to provincial jurisdiction. They would therefore have a conception of their duties entirely different from what senators elected by MPs would have. Moreover, the Senate would be composed of a political *pot-pourri* with which a government might find it difficult to negotiate productively. The Senate could also become a house of obstruction if the party in office federally held office in few provinces.

The Committee considered these arguments and is persuaded that indirect election would not meet its principal reform objectives, which are to strengthen the Senate's capacity to fulfil the functions of regional representation, legislative review and investigation, and to increase the political authority of Parliament as a whole.

Direct election

A sizable proportion of witnesses, roughly comparable to that advocating reformed appointment, supported direct election of senators by the people of Canada.

A number of arguments are made in favour of direct election. Witnesses emphasized that only direct election would give the Senate substantial political authority. Consequently, if Senate reform is to give the people of the less populous provinces and territories a stronger voice in Parliament, an elected Senate would be the best way to achieve that goal.

Witnesses pointed out that with such a Senate, those who have territorially or culturally based interests in federal legislation and policies would have someone in the nation's capital to express their views in a direct, public and politically effective way — provided senators were not too bound by party discipline. As a result, those interests would no longer have to seek an outlet through provincial governments. That should help to remove an important source of irritation from federal-provincial relations. Inter-regional disputes about federal legislation and policies could be debated and resolved in a national forum rather than at federal-provincial conferences, which sometimes give the public an impression of constant bickering and national disunity.

Those who recommend proportional representation point out that direct election would bring better regional balance to the caucuses of the national parties, thus encouraging greater accommodation of regional views in party policies. A prime minister seeking to construct a regionally balanced cabinet would also have more choice.

Finally, those who support direct election say it works well in Australia which, like Canada, has a parliamentary system in the British tradition and is a federal country; Canada would not be introducing an untried system.

Those who oppose direct election say that elected senators would be bound to feel that they ought to exercise powers equivalent to those of MPs; this would result in a chamber that would compete with the House of Commons and endanger our system of responsible parliamentary government. It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to