

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will allow the Hon. Member for Regina—Lumsden to answer after question period if we are still on this bill.

It being eleven o'clock the House will now proceed to statements by members.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

SENATE REFORM

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the voters of Alberta, I take exception to the recent Senate election in that province. In general, it just cannot be correct that each province determine the method of selection of Senators. One province, such as Alberta, may have all the voters vote for all the candidates, another province may choose to have Senators elected by ridings or by counties or by population distribution. In any case we would have chaos across Canada.

In the particular case of Alberta, the method used to elect a Senator could result in Senators coming from only one town or city. Under this system in Nova Scotia most or all of Senators would end up coming from Halifax. That system is hardly effective representation for Alberta, Nova Scotia or any province.

Such an important issue as Senate reform must result in a uniform system by agreement with all governments involved and under the rules of our Constitution. Senate selection cannot be haphazard and inconsistent across Canada.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's statement by the member for South Shore on Bill C-21 cannot go unchallenged. The minimum number of weeks to qualify for UI went from 10 to 14 weeks in Guysborough, not because of the Senate but because on December 20 the government he supports voted down legislation in this House which would have maintained the minimum entrance requirements at 10 to 14 weeks for another year.

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The member should know that if Bill C-21 is passed, unemployed workers in his riding will require not 14 weeks to qualify for UI benefits but 15 weeks if they live in Lunenburg County and 18 weeks if they live in Queens or Shelburne Counties. Furthermore, UI benefits to his fishermen will be made more vulnerable as they will be no longer financed out of general revenues.

Rather than accusing the Senators of hypocrisy, the member would better serve his constituents by calling on his Minister of Employment and Immigration to withdraw this bill and return the minimum weeks to qualify for UI to 10 to 14 weeks as we on this side of the House have been urging her to do.

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CHINESE NEW YEAR

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, this past year has not been an easy one for many Chinese Canadians. The massacre in Tiananmen Square shocked the world. Loyalties to the homeland were mixed with concerns of new repressions. Uncertainties increased in Hong Kong and many people made plans to emigrate to Canada.

In British Columbia tensions increased as new immigrants were unfairly blamed for rising house prices. The Canadian Government sold entry tickets to Canada to rich investors, while poorer relatives were refused admission. Racism surfaced; most recently a racist pin circulating in Alberta which denigrates visible minorities and multiculturalism.

Chinese Canadians are contributing in all walks of Canadian life, in business as workers, in professions as judges and as a Lieutenant-Governor. Immigration has reunited families who are helping each other to become established. Their children are among our best students. Our economy and communities are strengthened and our culture enriched as a result. I know all parliamentarians join me saying "Gung hai, fay choy, happy Chinese new year".

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MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Mr. J.W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, as we approach the critical deadline for adoption of the Meech Lake Accord, I wish to clearly reiterate, as I have previously expressed on several occasions, my personal strong support for this constitutional amendment. For me the overwhelming imperative