

basis in what is happening in the community as a whole. A membership such as that, plus some who after long experience have retired, would make this a very up-to-date chamber. So it is important that we should not allow the status of the Senate to be eroded in any way.

There is one thing that we have allowed to happen, and I am troubled by it although I have seen a marked improvement in the last couple of years. Not only have we been subjected to some criticism from members of the other house from time to time, but the attitude of the press towards us has been extremely bad. I really think that, to a large degree, is our own fault. I know that when we conducted the last major study of tax reform we received extremely bad press coverage. Those of us who took issue with the press and criticized them for not being here to know and understand what we had done, for not attending the committee meetings to know what had taken place there, found that when we made the position clear and said, "You are simply not telling the truth in the way you are reporting this," there followed a marked improvement in the calibre of reporting.

This is certainly the case in British Columbia. The Vancouver *Sun* and the Vancouver *Province* are to be highly commended for the kind of reporting that is now appearing in their pages. I think that is the direct result of our saying to them, "No, we are not going to be intimidated by your criticism. We accept that you have the right to make valid criticism, but you also have the responsibility to report the efficiency of, and the excellent work done by, the Senate and its committees. All we are asking for is fair treatment." When we take that position we seem to improve our press relationships and our communications with the people.

● (1510)

The most recent thing that is heard from time to time is almost a plea or a hope that we could have Senate committees of the nature of the showcase in the United States. Well, the Senate committee there is a showcase. The people can see senators in action, asking tough questions and going through the whole process, and so on. I do not know how to go about initiating a scandal so that we can have a showcase to bring the television in here. I do not think there would be many members of this house, if any, who would want to be a party to a kind of Watergate scandal. Perhaps we would get more volunteers if we suggested the British-type scandal. It seems that there is a need—and perhaps we should be talking to the CBC—to have some of the committee meetings properly televised.

A press reporter for whom I have great regard was telling me a few weeks ago why he attended a Senate committee meeting. When I saw him I asked, "Why are you here?" He replied, "It is simple. When I really want to get to the guts of an issue or the thrust of a piece of legislation, to know what is really intended, I go to a Senate committee. That is where I hear questions put that go to the root of the legislation and I get a better understanding of what is behind it." I think that was a very fine compliment to pay to committees of the Senate. I also think that it is the kind of thing that should be more widely known.

I received a letter from a school in Kitimat, British Columbia, saying that they thought the Senate should

[Hon. Mr. Lawson.]

have committees and that they should work on all kinds of problems; that they should help the members of Parliament. They had no knowledge or understanding whatever of the role or function of the Senate and its committees. I took the precaution of getting some of the fine pieces of work which Senator Croll prepared on poverty, which Senator Lamontagne prepared on science policy, as well as Senator Davey's report on the mass media, and I bundled these up and sent them to the school. I said, "Let me know when you have read all this, and I will send you some more."

But, really, in retrospect, whose fault is it? Is it the school's fault for not being aware of what is taking place? Is it the teacher's fault? Or is it perhaps our fault for not making what takes place in our committees well enough known?

I think any committee report which is printed and published in book form should be made available to, and even sent to, all of the schools across the country so that they can know and understand what we are doing. I would not be a bit interested in hearing somebody say that that would be terribly expensive. I would not be concerned about that. Perhaps we should get an Opportunities for Youth grant, or a special grant of some kind, and spend it on making Canadians, especially young Canadians, aware of what their Houses of Parliament are doing, what this chamber is doing, what its committees are doing, the role it is playing, and our hopes for the future.

In spite of all the criticism, I would mention that in a serious and heated debate in the provincial legislature—and, Senator Croll, I think this will please you somewhat—in which members of four different parties were involved, they all used as authority for their very valid points Senator Croll's report on poverty. Is it not interesting that a defunct, non-functioning body of people sleeping in red chairs, somehow produced a report which those members of the provincial legislature quoted as their supreme authority for the points they were making? I think that is a fine commentary on the calibre of performance of the committees of this house.

I am somewhat troubled by the question of reform. I think one honourable senator made the point a couple of weeks ago by saying that if you move one part, perhaps all the other parts do not necessarily fall into place. We need to be very careful in the way we go about Senate reform. Perhaps there is a greater need for reform of senators and our attitudes than there is for reform of the chamber or its role. We need to be far more aggressive. If we were being rated as a football club is, we would have a weak offence and no defence. Really, with what is performed by this chamber and its committees, with the kind of raw material available to us, we should go on the offensive; we should be far more aggressive in dealing with criticisms made of this chamber. We should adopt suggestions such as that made by Senator Lapointe, that we should be more involved throughout the community as a whole, and should point out our accomplishments, our role and our function.

We should be very cautious, in my view, in changing the rules. I think we should go slowly, because many of the rules we are talking about changing have never been operated at full speed. And so a word of caution. I think