

Tenure of Senators

for further debate in the other place where, so far, that debate has been sadly lacking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): The Hon. Member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain).

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the Hon. Member for Edmonton East (Mr. Yurko) on the work that he has done on this subject matter and the literal thesis which he wrote about it. Whether I agree with him or not is another question.

Unfortunately for us, we have lost sight of the purpose of the Senate. The Senators themselves have lost sight of the very basic philosophical and political logic on which the bicameral system was instituted in Canada at the beginning. The initial understanding of Canada was that it was, in fact, made up of regions; that these regions had differences of needs and opinions, and that the best way to have these represented was by a Senate with a regional representation rather than to have representation by population. This, of course, has been the principle on which the Senate of the United States was formed. State by State there are two Senators. There is a regional impact in that Senate at any point in time they wish to exercise it. It is perhaps more noticeable in the farm belts of the United States than it is in any other region. The Senate, by virtue of its two Senators per State, has been able to exercise the interest of the region which it represents in a fashion which is in the best interest of the nation as a whole. There has been very little criticism of the failure of the Senate to be there by representation by population.

Again I am very sincere when I refer to the very hard work the Hon. Member for Edmonton East has done. Of course the Hon. Member for Perth (Mr. Jarvis) and others who sat on the committee did an equally diligent job of considering the subject matter. What we have not considered in any of the remarks today is the fact that the Government of Canada, since I have been here, has chosen to issue ultimatums to the Senate, and the Senate has chosen suppliantly to give them exactly what they ask for in the ultimatums. For instance, budgets have gone from this House to the Senate and back in the same afternoon. That means that the Senate has absented itself from its—

Mr. Evans: Matters of supply do not go to the Senate.

Mr. McCain: Supply and other items of a comparable nature do go, but they cannot change supply, I agree. Let us take Canagrex. Canagrex was a Bill in which there were regional inputs, with regional differences of attitude toward that particular Bill. That Bill went there about noon and was back not later than the next morning. In that case, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that those regional Senators did in fact divest themselves from the responsibilities of their office as appointed and as it was intended that they should function.

I submit that another primary example is the lassitude which Maritime or Atlantic Senators have shown toward the reduction in federal allocations of money for cost-shared programs, which has put the Atlantic provinces in a very, very

serious financial position. Yet, there has been no debate that I am aware of with Atlantic Senators speaking up on behalf of the Atlantic provinces. In round figures—and I cannot get an exact figure; I perhaps could get one from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde)—the Minister of Finance has stated that in a five-year period we will have some \$6 billion. With respect to the Bill on health care, which will pass, that Bill and that attitude, coupled with the reduction in the percentage of cost-sharing which the federal Government has exercised recently, will put Atlantic Canada \$1 billion short of its needs to render service on the same level as in the rest of Canada. This is an opportunity for the Senators of Atlantic Canada to speak up and to exercise their input.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that an elected Senator is not the answer. It might be the answer if elections were simultaneous, because in that case the body of the Senate would in fact correspond with, in most instances, the Government that might be elected at a particular moment in time. But if perhaps a senatorial election should happen some 18 months after a change in Party of the federal Government, there is no doubt that with any backlash against an 18-month old government in this nation—18 months after its mandate was granted by the vote of the people—the Government would find itself in conflict with that Senate which was elected 18 months thereafter.

I do not see it as a solution. I see it as an amplification of the problems which we already have in respect to the purpose of the Senate, namely, to give second thought to all legislation as well as to give regional representation which is so badly needed. I come from that region and understand that need.

I would have to say to you that I agree with the Hon. Member for Perth when he said that each Member should have his own constituency as far as an elected Senate is concerned. I also agree with the Hon. Member for Perth when he suggested that it is very difficult for provincial Governments to make appointments. I give the instance of the last siege of federal Government, which has gone on since 1963. If the provinces of Atlantic Canada, which are all Conservative, were to appoint Senators, I submit to you that the same problem would exist in the Senate, if they exercised their regional influence as they should, as would, in my opinion, result from elections of the House of Commons and Senate which were not simultaneous.

I submit to you that the Senate is in disrepute because it has neglected its regional responsibilities and, secondly, because the Government has issued ultimatums to it, to which it has unfortunately submitted itself and thus brought upon itself the great bulk of the criticism which has been levelled at it of late. It blames the Prime Minister of this day and the Senate itself for its capitulations to ultimatums one after the other which have been issued to it by this Government. Properly appointed and with their responsibilities exercised as it was perceived they should be exercised, the appointed Senators can accumulate skills which I do not believe can be accumulated by the election process. I do not believe it can be accomplished.