

Supply

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Shall all notices of motions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I wish to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 33(2)(b) because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by 19 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

MAIN ESTIMATES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Since today is the final allotted day for the supply period ending June 23, 1994, the House will go through the usual procedures to consider and dispose of a supply bill.

In view of recent practices do hon. members agree that the bill be distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

CONCURRENCE IN VOTE 1—PARLIAMENT

Hon. Marcel Massé (for the President of the Treasury Board) moved:

That Vote 1, in the amount of \$26,952,000 under the heading Parliament—The Senate—Program expenditures, in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1995 (less the amount voted in Interim Supply), be concurred in.

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to support the motion of the President of the Treasury Board that vote 1 in the amount of \$26,952,000 under the heading Parliament—The Senate be concurred in.

It would be appropriate for me, speaking on behalf of a government that is committed to fundamental institutional change and modernization designed to update our institutions for the economic and other problems at the end of the century and the beginning of the next, to comment on the role of the Senate as an institution in our governmental system. One of the first things to recognize is the antinomies presented by the Senate in its present operation.

On the one hand, and I quote from the beautiful wood carvings in the office of the president of the Senate from the Roman saga *Seneca*: "Nothing is well ordered that is hasty and precipitate"

which of course indicates attention to the conventional role that senators talk of themselves today, a House of sober second thought.

It is balanced by the quote from the great Roman tribune Cicero which translated says: "It is the duty of the nobles to oppose the fickleness of the multitudes". Horace, who is a more popular poet, put it a little better when he said: "Odi profanum volgus et arceo!" I hate the profane mob, I keep aloof from them.

The Senate has always had this particular problem that you are exerting a power historically of correction and revision of a lower House that over the centuries had become increasingly more representative and fully democratized by the opening of the 20th century with the expansion of the franchise. Yet it is a House that over the centuries became increasingly more representative and fully democratized by the opening of the 20th century with the expansion of the franchise and yet the Senate has remained with a constitutional system that is wholly non-elective and that by the beginning of the 20th century had become anachronistic in historical terms. Indeed, the great House at Westminster, in light of which the Canadian Constitution Act in 1867 was framed and which members of this House refer to reverently and probably appropriately in that sense, abolished the powers of the House of Lords, the upper House, effectively in 1911.

• (1540)

The Parliament Act of 1911 reduced the powers of the House of Lords to a suspensive veto of two years. This was in 1911. It was a reform measure introduced by a dynamic Liberal premier, Mr. Asquith, and his lieutenant, Lloyd George. It was changed after World War II by the Attlee government through reduction of the suspensive veto to three months.

There was a recognition that the principle of constitutional legitimacy which is one of the hallmarks of western and western derived constitutional democracy requires that large discretionary powers be based on an electoral mandate or some species of electoral confirmation.

So there is the dilemma for the Senate today, one which we have lived with for a considerable number of years and for which we have not as yet made the steps taken by the House at Westminster, the model for the Canadian Parliament.

I had the pleasure of addressing a seminar of eastern European parliamentarians who were here last week seeking advice from the Canadian Parliament, seeking to benefit from our experience. One of the Polish members of Parliament, a thoughtful gentleman who is also a professor of law at the University of Warsaw, said to me: "You have unconstitutional constitutional provisions in your constitution". It sounds like an oxymoron and yet it is there. He said: "Look, I have read in the Constitution Act that to be a member of the Senate you have to have property worth \$4,000". He said: "Is that democratic? It would not be constitutional in Poland".