

*Adjournment Debate*

This is not only an undemocratic argument; it is also dangerous and untrue. Mr. Waters is a forthright man who shoots from the hip. Under the Trudeau administration, he was commander of the Canadian Army. Since retiring from the Forces, he has been one of Alberta's most prominent businessmen and, indeed, was a very prominent Tory until Preston Manning arrived on the scene. The External Affairs Minister's comments about Mr. Waters' views possibly say more about his own attitude to fiscal conservatives in his own party than they do about Mr. Waters.

Finally there is the argument that this series of events has somehow violated the Canadian Constitution. Let me make my party's position clear here. Under the Constitution Act, 1867, Section 24, it is the Governor General who appoints senators and the Governor General is free to do as he or she pleases. Now we know that the Governor General, by convention, takes advice from the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister may choose to recommend Mr. Waters or anyone else. That is his choice.

I would remind the government, however, that a constitution operates not only according to the letter of the law but also according to a series of conventions, the intention of which is to ensure that the democratic will prevails. Clearly, the Prime Minister has the technical authority to do what he wants, but the political culture of our country clearly says that the right thing to do is to appoint Mr. Waters and appoint him now. If he denies democracy or delays it, it will be clear where he stands with regard to the views of Albertans and their basic right to representation. I trust that whoever answers my question will shed some light on where the government really stands on this issue and Senate reform generally. The government has been suspiciously quiet about where it stands on every one of the three Es in the reform proposal. In both the debate over Meech Lake and over Mr. Waters it is becoming increasingly suggested by Canadians that the government is really trying to block Senate reform in almost any form. Perhaps this is what Premier Getty is beginning to suspect. It seems as though he is definitely concerned about that. Nothing radical is happening here. It is just a start. After 122 years, surely westerners are entitled to that.

• (1825)

**Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, in an exchange with the Prime Minister on October 30, the member for Beaver River asked whether Canadians can expect to hear of the appointment of Stan Waters to the Senate of Canada.

As the hon. member is probably aware, Premier Getty wrote to the Prime Minister last October 19 while the Prime Minister was out of the country. In his response to the question last Monday, the Prime Minister indicated that he had not yet had an opportunity to consider the matter. Senate appointments remain the Prime Minister's prerogative. It is only reasonable that he have the time to do so.

The hon. member raised a second issue last Monday. She said, "It is not a matter of when but it is a matter of why not reform the Senate". I would like to take this opportunity to respond on behalf of the government.

In August, 1986, all premiers agreed to defer Senate reform to a second round of constitutional discussions when all governments would once again be present at the constitutional table. Once proclaimed, the Meech Lake Accord will guarantee that Senate reform will be a priority agenda item on future annual constitutional conferences by the First Ministers. The Government of Canada is committed to fundamental Senate reform. The Prime Minister has promised to table a proposal for an elected Senate in the first constitutional conference provided by the Meech Lake Accord.

In the meantime, to reflect the federal government's commitment to pursue this important issue, earlier this year Senator Murray carried out a round of informal bilateral consultations on Senate reform with all provincial governments. So, we share the hon. member's belief that there should be fundamental reform of the Senate. That being said, questions have been raised about Alberta's Senate election initiative.

As I see it, Alberta's initiative raises issues that go well beyond filling one Senate vacancy. It touches on the role of one of our two Houses of Parliament and the broad question of how we should go about reforming the Senate. Some commentators noted that a precedent could be created here. Some have said that this is a good precedent, and that they hope other provinces will adopt Alberta's process. Others, including Alberta Intergov-