

a meeting of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications to study the subject matter of the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act and of the Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments for a review of statutory instruments. Finally, there will be a meeting of the internal economy, budgets and administration committee. All these meetings will take place next week. In other words, apart from the regular meetings of the Senate, there is considerable activity in the committees.

In the one or two minutes I have remaining, I would like to refer to section 44 because it will be a contentious area. As the opposition leader in the Senate, the Hon. Jacques Flynn, said concerning the constitutional proposal:

—if this address goes to Westminster and becomes law, thereafter any amendment to our constitution, including the abolition of the Senate, could be made without the Senate having a word to say about it.

Of course, this is a concern of the senators. I believe that we should think sincerely about their complaint as to whether or not this is the objective. I have looked at comments made to the special joint committee by the different groups. I have found only two groups which are frightened at the thought of the abolition of the Senate, the Canada West Foundation, because it believes that westerners see the Senate as the best means of representing all the regions in the central government and the Inuit Committee on National Issues, which is concerned because of its desire for representation in both Houses of Parliament. The amendments to the Constitution which were proposed recently lengthen from 90 days to 180 days the time which is contained in paragraph 44. The 180 days corresponds roughly to the six-month period to which I referred earlier.

● (1620)

In my opinion we have a group of hardworking senators. We receive from the Senate a tremendous amount of important material. Excellent studies are done by the Senate which are invaluable to the country. This indicates to me that there should be no contemplation of abolition of the Senate. But if there is to be continuing discussion of representation—and I know this is a very difficult thing to say—then Canadians from across the country should be able to sit down and decide on the way that body can be composed so that everyone is satisfied not only on a regional representation basis but on the basis that the Senate is exercising the function for which it was intended, that of a good regionally representative body of sober and second thought.

Hon. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) on the complimentary nature of his address and on the tribute he has paid to much of the work which comes from the other House, the Senate. He has given us a list of papers and studies which we will find valuable. I agree with him that the structure of the Senate is such that similar armament in terms of expertise and in the strengthening of committees of this House would go a long way toward resolving many of the problems we leave on the table and do not get time to finish.

Tenure of Senators

I do not mean to be unkind with my next remark but any private member's bill is a vehicle to draw attention to an essential and important issue concerning many of us. He has outlined the concern that other members have for the Senate, either complete abolition, restructuring or changing the membership thereof.

I would like to take a few minutes to point out that the bill itself is something like a shingle nail trying to hold Canada together, and I do not mean this unkindly. If we have one major problem that we are failing to resolve as a parliament, it is the problem of regionalism. By regionalism, I mean not only western Canada, Upper Canada or Ontario, Lower Canada or Quebec and the Atlantic union, but I mean you can have regionalism in Metropolitan Toronto, and out in British Columbia. There is an article in *The Globe and Mail* about Labrador. In reading that article one can see the extent of regionalism which exists in Labrador. Even many of the people in the high north do not want to talk with one another or get into regional frictions. It seems to me that regionalism is a subject matter on which we should be spending a great deal of time if we are to design a federalism which gives the nation the strength that we all talk about but do not get down to addressing.

I am speaking in a rather impromptu manner to this bill because I am deeply concerned about this one issue: What are we going to do to address the regionalism, other than to improve the vehicle of communicating with each other? We are not a melting pot as is the United States. We call ourselves multicultural. We have people who used to call themselves Canadians but who are now more proud of their ethnic origins than they were say, five or ten years ago of being Canadian. I had a charming lady tell me at lunch that she was extremely proud of her father's ancestry. She is a well-educated person from this province, but the strong feeling about her ancestry has happened to her recently.

This trouble exists in the minds of many of us, indeed, altogether too many of us. It is easy to attack the ruptures which arise in our society. For example, look at the people who want to separate from the central part of Canada. It is easy to attack the West-Feds and the Western Canadian Foundation. It is easy to attack those who want to join the United States. It is easy to attack and put down those who feel aggrieved, but that grievance is still there. We still have not addressed or used this vehicle of government or given it a structure that will allow us to communicate and talk this situation out.

If we are talking about doing anything to the Senate we have to strengthen it in its armament to represent the regions and to address regionalism in Canada.

The trouble with the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker—that heritage which has come down to us from the British parliamentary system—is that it represents population centres. It gives power to the population centres. In our form of government, whoever has the greatest number of seats in this chamber becomes the government, and the government is the power and the decision-making base. The decision-making