

for the reform of the Senate. Most, if not all, of the schemes for Senate reform, whether in position papers from outside Parliament, or in proposed legislation like Bill C-60, or in the speeches of politicians, or in articles of columnists, have been written by students or scholars, sometimes semi-scholars, commissioned or self-appointed, to produce a result which is popular, sometimes demagogic, and which will offer inducements to groups perceived to be their beneficiaries. Sometimes the test—and it seems to me in most of these papers this is the case—is: “Can the scheme be sold? Think not of its value once it is in place. Worry about that later.”

Most of the schemes for Senate reform have centred around the idea that this house should have a higher profile in the area of regional representation. With that we can agree. However, that view must be balanced against the representation which the regions of this country have in the House of Commons, in the cabinet, in the provincial legislatures, and at the federal-provincial conference.

In passing, may I observe that the regional representation provided by the Senate, to which Senator Macquarrie has already referred, was powerfully and authoritatively recognized by Prime Minister Clark when he brought into his cabinet, to supplement the shortfall of his supporters from Quebec in the House of Commons, two of our distinguished colleagues, Senator Flynn and Senator Asselin. As ministers and as senators, they distinguished themselves and brought honour to this house. We are all conscious of that. I would add that Mr. Clark's appointment of our former colleague, Senator de Cotret, to this house, and to a senior portfolio in the cabinet, showed not only an understanding of the structure of Parliament, but it gave Senator de Cotret a forum for helpful, even brilliant, activity.

I am equally pleased that the present Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, for the same reason, has in his cabinet Senator Perrault, Senator Olson and Senator Argue as spokesmen for British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, from which provinces he has no supporters in the House of Commons. I wish these colleagues well in their new duties. Both of these events are a mature development in a Canadian parliamentary tradition.

● (1600)

Without a Senate constituted as it is, our parliamentary tradition and our parliamentary institutions would have been sadly deficient. The Senate has been a salutary safety valve—not always to be used just as a safety valve, but available in emergencies.

Honourable senators, earlier I alluded to the fact that the recent schemes for Senate reform, or some of them, have been ill advised. To concentrate on the need for regional representation through the Senate to the exclusion of the other functions of this chamber, in my view, is a defective approach. To propose that all or the controlling numbers of an upper house be appointed by provincial governments or legislatures in my view, is to ignore the federal responsibility. Provincial governments and legislators have local and provincial matters as their main concern.

[Senator Connolly.]

Legislators in the federal Parliament must match their concerns and activities to the national requirement. They must reconcile their concerns about the effect of national policy upon their home areas in the light of the national need. It is the welfare of Canada as a whole which must guide their decision.

Provincial appointees to a second chamber would be expected to be provincial spokesmen, locally partisan, and perhaps even almost agents of provincial authorities. In a federal system, such a proposal is not sound. Short of an elected upper house, which the Commons would never tolerate, the federal authority must retain the power of appointment to the upper house; indeed, to all the principal elements of the federal establishment.

In addition to Bill C-60, there have been several other proposals for constitutional change involving the Senate. They all have a common denominator. Whether they propose an upper house called the House of the Federation, the House of the Provinces, or any other name, as I have said, they confer upon the provinces the power to appoint to a new kind of second chamber of this Parliament, but they also remove from that upper chamber the effective power to amend bills. If these suggestions are designed to give provinces effective influence over federal legislation, they fail. If they are an attempt to remove power from the federal authority, they have the opposite effect.

I say this because by eliminating the right of the second chamber to amend bills, they make the government of the day—that is to say the executive—supreme. Under these proposals, through its whips, the government can control the House of Commons and give the ultimate decision for all legislation that goes through that chamber to the Commons and to the government. This does not augment provincial influence over federal legislation. It promises to add only another forum for the expression of provincial discontent. I should think that the federal-provincial conference, properly constituted, is a more telling agency for the effective expression of provincial concerns.

In this day, with the demand for a new federalism, there may well be areas of federal jurisdiction which would be more appropriately occupied by the provincial legislators and vice versa. When areas of jurisdiction as between federal and provincial authorities are to be adjusted—and unquestionably they must be adjusted—trade-offs must be made in the reallocation of the heads or parts of the heads in sections 91 and 92. That is a matter for an intergovernmental conference. The dismemberment of the Senate will not achieve it.

To confer upon the provinces the power of appointment to some upper chamber—some kind of upper chamber which is no more than a debating society—may seem like a concession to the provinces, but it does not help any province realize any of its aspirations in respect of power-sharing. It would not give a province a single additional iota of influence over federal legislation. In real terms the so-called new voices on Parliament Hill would signify nothing. The proposal is misleading. It is a red herring. It diverts attention away from the trou-