

## **ELECTED SENATE -- A Proposal**

by Walt Moore

The 2004 election highlighted two key, systematic factors. One is an elected Senate and the other is a House of Commons elected by proportional representation. The latter would provide equitable representation to the 80 percent of the population living in urban centers, mostly close to the United States (US) border. But then, 80 percent of the geography of Canada would belong to aboriginals and exploiters. Our colonial form of government worked well for the Klondike gold rush over a century ago, but times have changed and the US solved the proportional geography problem more than two centuries ago. This might also be a question of our survival.

### **National Unity**

The separatist wave has gone by, the Bloc notwithstanding. We must get ready for the next wave. To begin with, no US Congress can be expected to put up with a separate Quebec, underwrite the Canadian dollar, dilute their authority, or give up check points across the middle of the continent. The next wave includes increased mobility, NAFTA, globalization and "new-world-order". Incremental absorption by the US, effectively as colonies, is the problem.

We have been here before. Even the CBC series on Canada's history alludes to the effects and aftermath of the US Civil War! Fortunately for us, all that American power turned west to beat up on Mexicans and Indians at that time. The current wave has different dimensions. My point is that Canada's politicians got nervous in 1864, the civil war ended in 1865, and we had a Constitution in 1867! Speed is both possible and urgent.

A *status quo* in structural relationships among Canadians can hasten our demise as a country. The House of Commons represents the population, the appointed Senate represents patronage, the Provinces are uneven historical accidents, and the vast hinterlands are effectively colonies - like all of Canada is becoming to the United States.

We have a Senate. Let's fix it, and the hinterlands. A short "window of opportunity" to better represent Canadian geography, in a US Senate model, appears to exist.

### **Proposed New Canadian Senate**

About 40 fixed-area Senate Electoral Regions are required. Physiographic similarities (i.e., combinations of landscapes) would be important. Populations move. The Regions might range from about the size of North Dakota in the south to that of the High Arctic above Parry Channel (Northwest Passage! Not yet taken seriously!) in the north. The country subdivision selection problem might be sent to schools, to Citizen Assemblies, or posted on the Internet to get citizens involved. They would certainly learn a lot more about the size and geography of Canada! Some suggested qualifications for

Senate candidates follow:

- 1) two members for each region (perhaps one male and one female, to be fair);
- 2) over 40 years of age (for life experiences, whether sober or not);
- 3) every Member of the House of Commons should have a vote in every Senate Region (in effect, modified free-vote appointments in low population Regions);
- 4) each Senator should have a first or second residence in his/her Region;
- 5) each Senator should be elected for a fixed term (i.e., 4, 5, or 6 years); and,
- 6) otherwise, present Senate powers and responsibilities would continue with little modification -- except perhaps in fairness and effectiveness for regional representation.

### **Appointments**

The Governor General should still be appointed. This has been a success as viewed from the diversity of backgrounds represented in such a ceremonial position. In addition, 80 elected Senators might leave room for 20 appointments of special expertise. But these are details.

### **Effect**

Let's face it, we're becoming Americans. The process could continue incrementally as now, or be quite sudden in a calamity. After all, we abandoned our sovereignty during World War II. In the event of a take-over (i.e., in a global emergency), the popular "51st State" nonsense just might be implemented in the heat of panic. This is all the more likely if we do not have a compatible government structure. The establishment of States and Territories would be fair if we had existing Senatorial Electoral Regions on a US Senate model. There should not be any confusion about Canada becoming one to ten States.

This might even be called a form of "Civil Defence" -- for our culture and history -- for probable, future and unexpected convulsions on the world scene. That's world history!

### **Consequences**

Meanwhile, the Senate would become effective regional representation. It would also become much more significant for issues affecting the whole country. The fate of the unequal historical accidents called Provinces would have to be resolved by the respective voters and taxpayers (and Constitutional re-write).

In addition, a regionally elected Senate might also be a vehicle for representing municipal and aboriginal interests -- particularly if there is to be proportional representation in the House of Commons. If so, there could be enormous reductions in overhead, bickering

and duplications -- and thereby taxes.

Global changes and the June 2004 election indicate that we require a new Senate, with a permanent geographic base, in a new Constitutional framework, to survive.