



Debates of the Senate (Hansard)

**2nd Session, 39th Parliament,
Volume 144, Issue 23**

**Wednesday, December 12, 2007
The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker**

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

The Honourable Pat Carney, P.C.

Resignation from the Senate

Hon. Pat Carney: Thank you, colleagues. I thank those of you who took the opportunity to offer me good wishes and Godspeed for my retirement. It is much appreciated and reflects the friendships we have made over the 25 years I have been a parliamentarian.

In view of the comments made by Senator Fairbairn, who wore the shortest miniskirts in the press gallery in the cool 1960s — she had the best legs — I should note that I never intended to become a politician. As a journalist, I sat in the press gallery in the other place looking down literally and figuratively on the MPs while Dief the Chief jiggled his jowls, Walter Gordon and Mitchell Sharp engaged in partisan debates, and I wondered why anyone would choose to be in politics.

I was persuaded by Senator Murray and his colleagues to become a political Joan of Arc, fighting the armies of bureaucrats wielding red tape. Now, after nearly 30 years of political battles, I am reminded that Joan was burned at the stake, a fate I wish to avoid by taking early retirement, retreating from the battlefield relatively unscathed.

I have had the unique opportunity to sit on all sides of both Houses of Parliament as an opposition MP, as a government cabinet minister, and again as an opposition and government senator. It has given me a well-rounded view of the Canadian legislative process, which I think ranks with the best in the world, and I would like to leave you with some observations.

Canadian democracy is based not only on the rule of law but on the principle of accountability. As MPs, we are accountable to the people who elected us, as well as those who did not. As senators, we are accountable to our regions, and to the defence of the Canadian Constitution and the rights of minorities. Always we are accountable to our country, Canada. It is our primary duty as parliamentarians. I stress this because the issue of accountability is the subject of scandal and speculation in today's political environment, obscuring the fact that as Canadians we have one of the most open, accessible and transparent political systems in the world.

Unlike some countries, we do not need to be millionaires to run for office. When I ran in 1979, the requirements for nomination were \$200 and 25 signatures. In 2007, it is \$1,000 and 50 signatures for small constituencies and 100 signatures for larger ridings.

Normally, the successful candidate is the person who signs up the most members and delivers them to the nomination meeting in sufficient strength to win a majority of the votes cast. Party memberships are generally modest, \$5 or \$10. This simple strategy is often overlooked by would-be candidates.

Stringent rules apply under the Conservative government's Federal Accountability Act, and previously with Prime Minister Chrétien's changes. These new rules reinforce the fact that Canadian federal elections cannot be bought by special interests. They are won or lost by political foot soldiers, the volunteers. The role of volunteers is of crucial importance and they rarely receives the glory they deserve.

My favourite story involves my first campaign in 1979. I was a shy and ineffective campaigner, believe it or not, and Flora MacDonald was sent west to teach me campaign techniques. Campaigning cannot be that hard, I thought, as Flora charmed the voters and dragged me along in her wake.

That evening, my team positioned me at the corner of Robson and Thurlow, one of Canada's busiest intersections. I chose an elderly lady with curly grey hair who was crossing the street. When she reached the curb, I stuck out my hand and said bravely, "I am Pat Carney, your Conservative candidate, and I need your vote." The benign-looking senior snatched her hand away and snapped viciously: "I would rather my hand withered and dropped off before shaking hands with a Conservative." She then walked away.

Nearly 30 years later, I find campaigning — because I still do that — is tougher for volunteers. At least that is the case in urban ridings, where seniors peer through the keyholes to check out visitors, home dwellers fear they are opening their doors to home invaders and the candidate's outstretched hand may be mistaken for a homeless street person seeking a handout; but our Canadian system depends on our volunteers, and we should all salute them.

I have been honoured to serve in the Canadian Parliament, and particularly to represent my beloved province of British Columbia, both as an MP — the first Conservative woman ever elected in B.C., and that was only in 1980 — and as a senator, supporting the importance of B.C. in a strong and united Canada, a subject I dealt with in my maiden speech in the other place as a newly elected MP.

Since then, B.C. has made some progress as an equal partner in Confederation. The province has attained status as a region for the purpose of exercising regional votes. Under Bill C-22, an Act to Amend the Constitution Act, 1867 with regard to democratic representation, now before Parliament, Prime Minister Harper proposes to restore the principle of representation by population, which was the guiding principle in determining the initial allocation of seats in the other place among the provinces at the time of Confederation.

In 1867, of course, B.C. was not a member of the Canadian union; and it has been generally under-represented since it joined Canada in 1871, although I would argue that the quality of those elected to represent the Pacific province helped make up the difference.

The pattern was set by one of our first B.C. premiers, Amor de Cosmos or "lover of the universe," also known as Bill Smith. The former Nova Scotian strongly endorsed the union of Canada in the colonial debates over the Terms of Union. However, when he became one of B.C.'s first MPs in Ottawa and he viewed how Confederation worked, he promptly introduced a resolution calling for B.C. to secede from Canada — a sentiment shared, if not implemented, by many who were elected after him.

Under the Harper formula, the number of seats allocated to B.C. will increase from 36 in the current House of Commons to 43, but we will have to wait another 10 years, until 2017, for that to happen.

I trust the gains that have been made in securing B.C.'s equality in Confederation will not be jeopardized by the possible introduction in this chamber of the motion to amend the Constitution of Canada, proposed by my esteemed colleague, Senator Murray, which proposes to double B.C.'s representation in the Senate from 6 to 12 seats or votes; as a region, B.C. is entitled to 24 Senate seats, the same allocated to the two founding regions of Ontario and Quebec. As I have argued in this place, a region is a region is a region.

The role of senators is sometimes disparaged by the public, and even more by some senators; but our responsibility to ensure the quality of legislation before us is paramount. One example was the 1991 Bill C-43, which dealt with abortion and which was raised by other honourable senators today. This, again, raised the principle of accountability, in my mind. The issue was not simply a matter of a woman's choice to choose, which I supported. In this case, I viewed the proposed legislation as badly flawed and unlikely to be effectively implemented, since some abortions would be deemed legal and others would be deemed a criminal act. Pregnancies, as we know, are not that predictable.

Senators routinely deal with poorly drafted legislation in our role as arbiters of sober second thought, and abortion is a highly emotional issue in our society. Although Prime Minister Mulroney had declared a free vote on the bill, I was subject, along with others, to unrelenting pressure from government ministers to support the legislation. I still recall that I was chilled to the bone when I became the first Conservative senator to stand in my seat to vote "no" to the bill, supported by colleagues such as Senator Fairbairn.

The abortion bill was the first government bill to be defeated in the Senate in 30 years. I often think what would have happened if we had wavered in our responsibilities and passed a bill that we knew

was a bad bill. That is an example, I think, that history overlooks. It was not just the defeat of the abortion bill; it was a perfect example of senatorial accountability.

I experienced a similar crisis of accountability in my role as the Minister of International Trade with the responsibilities for the Canada-U.S. free trade negotiations, which we successfully concluded in October 1987. As was outlined earlier, I was the Minister of Energy, negotiating the Atlantic accord with Newfoundland and Labrador, and a similar one with Nova Scotia dealing with the offshore oil and gas resources. I negotiated the Western Energy accord, which dismantled the Liberal's controversial National Energy Program; and was appointed by the Prime Minister, in 1986, as Minister for International Trade.

However, seasoned Canadian negotiator Simon Reisman did not intend to play by the rules of cabinet accountability, as some honourable senators will remember. Simon and I went on to be good colleagues, but his attitude then was, "You may be the minister, but I am not your deputy; I do not report to you." He also refused to report to the "fancy pants" in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. He also refused to divulge the status of the negotiations to either myself or to the cabinet. We sometimes learned more from Reisman's unauthorized media interviews than from discussions at the cabinet table. My cabinet colleagues were understandably frustrated with me. How would their departments and responsibilities be affected? What powers would be traded away? How would Canadian sovereignty be compromised? What elements were on the negotiating table? I had few specifics to give them.

Prime Minister Mulroney, as he said at the time, was rolling the dice, but Canada was the prize, and I am not a gambler. On June 18, 1987, after a stormy meeting with the Prime Minister, when both our Irish tempers were at boil, I wrote the Prime Minister a letter questioning whether there was any point in my continuing to play a role in this government. Honourable senators, I am tabling a copy of that letter today because the original was returned to me by Derek Burney, the Prime Minister's chief of staff. It was never logged in the Prime Minister's correspondence. The Prime Minister may never have read it.

Since we cannot find the original, I suspect that it was among my ministerial papers, which were illegally destroyed after I left International Trade for Treasury Board in April 1988. A subsequent investigation by the Privy Council Office failed to identify why ministerial papers were shredded and who ordered their destruction. What is interesting about this story is we subsequently learned that one reason he told us so little was he had so very little to tell.

On September 23, after walking out on the trade talks in Washington, Reisman told the Prime Minister and key ministers — and my colleague Senator Murray was at the meeting — that he could not engage the Americans on the key issues, and, with the clock running out on the President's fast-track authority to sign the agreement, then Finance Minister Michael Wilson, myself, Derek Burney and our able officials were dispatched by the Prime Minister to Washington to meet with our U.S. counterparts and conclude the remaining elements of the free trade agreement. We signed the document on October 4, 1987 — 20 years ago — and tabled it in Parliament a few days later. At the end of the day, ministerial responsibility was protected.

The real heroes and heroines of the free trade agreement are those Canadian businessmen and women who took the opportunity to access the huge U.S. market, to the benefit of millions of Canadians. Governments can only provide the framework. Canadians themselves earned the benefits and paid the costs. Politicians, including senators, are accountable to them.

I pay tribute to all of those who have written or emailed me good wishes on my retirement, particularly those in B.C. coastal communities, whose issues such as marine safety I have often supported, both as a senator and as a resident of Saturna Island. They include the Orca scientists, the lightkeepers, and the mariners from places that are familiar names to those along the B.C. coast but not normally familiar to people in Ottawa.

As a long-time mentor of women in politics, I leave the future in good hands. I have here a letter written by an 11-year-old girl from Richmond and Saturna Island. She wrote:

Dear Pat Carney:

I am a 11 year old girl who lives in Richmond and part time on Saturna. . . . I am very interested in politics and have been since I was 5. At the age of 6 I could name all the political parties and their leaders. Some day I want to be party leader or maybe even Prime Minister although Premier would do. I swing more left than right. I think politics is like feet. I have a left foot and a right foot; by themselves you fall over but put them together and you are sturdy.

That is why I think everyone's views should be heard, no matter what politics they believe in. I wish you a happy retirement, though I know you will be busy.

Ania.

Finally, I am very appreciative of my family, who have been so supportive over the years: My husband Paul White, who told me 30 years ago I should not go into politics — it took me 30 years to realize he was probably right — and my son, who is a Cathay Pacific pilot and flew in last night for our dinner, but missed this speech because he had to fly back to Hong Kong at 6:00 this morning.

I am particularly appreciative of my past and present staff, some of whom are with us today; those patient and talented people who deal with West Coast issues, help those who have lost their passports abroad, left their driver's licences back home in Scotland or are in trouble with the law, and deal with the myriad of problems that find their way to my office. With me today are Sarah Cuff, Patty Loveridge, Aneel Rangi, Cathy MacEachern and Janice Meller.

I would also like to recognize my Casey cousins from Ottawa and Grete Hale, of the Morrison sisters, who have contributed so much to my enjoyment of Ottawa.

To you, my Senate colleagues, I wish success in your senatorial endeavours.

In the words of St. Paul, ". . .the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" I have kept faith in Canada; faith in Parliament, where I have served for more than 25 years; and faith in whatever the future holds.

Now, Senator Day, we have to go to committee and discuss a bill to protect heritage lighthouses, for the seventh time.

God bless, and I seek permission to table the letter.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Is permission granted, Honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.