

WITH three of Alberta's elected nominees to the Senate



Alberta first used an election to decide a Senate nomination in 1989, and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appointed the winner, Stan Waters, to the Upper House in 1990. The federal Liberals have named none of those elected since. Bert Brown, a farmer from Balzac, and national chair of the Canadian Committee for a Triple-E Senate, has contested all three of Alberta's elections for the Senate. Famous for plowing three huge capital E's into a field of barley, he received the nod from voters in 1998 and again last year. Betty Unger, originally from Peace River and the manager of a nursing service company, ran federally in Edmonton against Justice Minister Anne McLellan before election as a Senate nominee in November, 2004. Link Byfield, the long-time editor and publisher of *Alberta Report* and founding chairman of the Citizens Centre for Freedom and Democracy, was also nominated to the Senate in that election. Brown, Unger and Byfield crossed the country in 2005 to lobby for Senate reform, and were interviewed by the Frontier Centre during that tour. mandatory voting to the Frontier Centre for Public Policy in Winnipeg on June 21, 2005.

Frontier Centre: The federal government still declines to accept your nominations as Senators from Alberta, even though you were directly elected. Why are you doing this tour?

Betty Unger: When we were elected, there were three Senate vacancies in Alberta, three of our six. We saw a window of opportunity, because Paul Martin for years had canvassed the country promising to fix the democratic deficit. We started with meetings with Ed Stelmach, Alberta's Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Bert was actually the one who started the idea of a task force to go across Canada to sell Alberta's vision of Senate reform to the rest of the country.

We agreed to start by sending letters out to the Maritime provinces, where we felt we had a lot of support. We sent letters to the Premiers telling them we would like to come and they in time responded by saying they were interested and that this was a subject that will be on the agenda for the Council of Federation meetings in August. What got us going on this tour was the desire to tell Canadians why Albertans feel so passionate about the need for reforming the Senate.

FC: Many Canadians generally don't understand what the Senate is and they are sympathetic to the idea of simply just getting rid of it. Bert, why do we need a Senate?

Bert Brown: We need it because we have no counter-balance at all to a Prime Minister with a majority in Parliament, who effectively controls not just the House of Commons by party discipline and the threat of expulsion. He also now controls the second chamber through the appointment procedure, which is the longest running system of legalized bribery in the modern world. It's better than having a 6/49 winning ticket because you don't even have to buy one, you're just given it by Prime Minister whose party has been whispering in your ear for ten years or more. You helped us in the last election, we're putting you on the short list for Senate appointment if you'll just help us with the next election. Probably there're ten thousand people on the short list but they're all working for a party because they all believe that they might end up in the Senate. Very few do, but an awful lot of loyalty is built into that whole equation.

FC: Are there other countries that treat the Senate as a patronage vehicle? Why would federal politicians give up that source of power?

Link Byfield: Certainly not voluntarily would they give up the kind of power that the Prime Minister exercises in this country. As I understand it, there are no other federal systems in the world which allow their chief executive to appoint a quarter of the Members of the Parliament, which what, of course, Senators are. You said earlier Canadians don't really understand what a Senate is. It is hard to blame them, they have never had one. What they have is a kind of extension of the Prime Minister's office called the Senate, which

rubberstamps documents as they come through, sometimes tweaking them a bit.

We are the only federal system in the world which doesn't have an elected second house. Britain, which is not a federal system, has mostly an upper house by inherited position and they have been trying to clean it up. There are some government appointments in it, but they are moving as best they can, if rather slowly, to a democracy. They are not quite sure how to do it, but their system is very old. Our system is only a hundred and some years old and it's become such a joke that they can't staff it properly. There are so many Liberals that they can't even run the committee system properly.

We think that it is inevitable that somebody's going to start electing Senators. The only real question in our mind is do we really want the provinces to wait around for Ottawa to start the process, because if Ottawa does the reform it won't be much of a reform. It may have the appearance of democracy but they will simply draw the teeth from the Senate so it can't get in the way. Right now it doesn't get in the way, even though it has the power, because they're not elected.

We think that the provinces should seize control of this agenda and start electing candidates so that when a Prime Minister, any prime minister, is confronted with the choice of appointing the Senators or losing seats in that area of the country, he chooses to appoint the Senators. Nothing constitutionally prevents him from choosing Senators that have already been chosen by the people that they represent. This would get Canada past the rather ridiculous point it's been at all this time, where its parliamentarians are not chosen by the people who they represent.

FC: Didn't this happen in the United States?

BB: Yes, in Oregon in 1903. U.S. Senators used to be appointed by state assemblies, but Oregon got tired of its Senator being called the Senator from Standard Oil, because that's how the system worked. Some major corporation would sponsor a candidate, and the assemblymen would pick him because they were given all kinds of money by the sponsor. The people of Oregon said, "We're holding an election." They held one and the assemblymen totally ignored it. So in the next general election, the people tossed all of them out and then held another Senate election. The first directly elected Senator of the United States was from the state of Oregon and eleven years later two-thirds of the states were electing illegally and unconstitutionally their own Senators. They passed the 17th Amendment to the American constitution, which gave them representation.

LB: It wouldn't be illegal here. Here there is nothing constitutional that prevents any province from holding elections and nothing prevents the Prime Minister from agreeing to appoint those elected. In fact, according to Section 22 of the 1867 Constitution, the Prime Minister is not the person who appoints a Senator. The Governor-General appoints him on behalf of the Queen to sit in the Senate.

Convention has it that the Prime Minister will tell the Governor-General who he wants. Convention can just as easily be amended and the Prime Minister will decide on those who the people have already picked, so it's unlike the United States where it actually was unconstitutional until they brought in the amendment.

FC: Betty, I don't notice an enormous upsurge of provinces saying that they want to do this. Alberta has done it. Are you seeing any traction on this idea during your tour?

BU: We've been warmly received everywhere we go and have had good discussions. In Prince Edward Island, we were provided with a copy of a media story from last fall, in which Premier Binns was speculating about the fact that PEI should elect a Senator to its currently vacant seat so that the people would have some say. When we were in Newfoundland, in 2003, then Premier Grimes had convened a Royal Commission on the issue that Newfoundlanders don't feel they have yet found their rightful place in Confederation. One of the resolutions that came out that was because their Senators are not elected, there is a sense of illegitimacy. One of its recommendations was a triple-E Senate. So this isn't an idea that is only from Alberta.

FC: Of the western provinces, Alberta would be the most enthusiastic about a triple-E Senate. What about the other provinces?

BU: British Columbia had legislation for electing Senators tabled in the legislature. It had a sunset clause, so it has since expired, but during that time Senator Pat Carney, who is very popular, said if the province did call for election she would resign and run. She is appointed but she said she would like to be elected.

FC: How about Saskatchewan and Manitoba?

BB: Jim Carr with the Business Council, and formerly a Liberal Party MLA, is personally very much in favor. He said their committees had studied it, and had actually moved to the point where they want to elect, but they have some questions that they wanted answered.

FC: But this interest was from with the Business Council, not the government?

BB: Yes, but they had some government representatives there as well, and the committee does have government representatives on it. I told them that at least one of the questions they wanted answered doesn't have an answer right now. They wanted to know why Alberta's legislation doesn't have a limit on the term of an elected Senator. It doesn't because we were told in the legislation draft the federal government would call it *ultra vires*, without effect, if we put a term in the legislation itself.

What's happened in Alberta is that everyone of who deems to run for nominee recants and makes a public statement that they are willing to live with a six-year term and rerun, and we have actually proven it works. First of all, when Stan Waters, who was the first ever elected and appointed, died, he was replaced by Roden Gare, who is a lawyer and leader in the Conservative Party. At the moment he was appointed, he said I will serve for only six years and step down and, lo and behold, he actually did. So it works even on a honor principle. Ted Martin and I were winners of the second-last election in Alberta and we had to run again in this last election in November.

FC: But were you symbolic Senators or did you get paid by the Alberta government?

BB: We are Senate nominees.

FC: But you're not getting paid.

BB: No, we're not getting paid. Ted and I went to Parliament and made a pain in the ass of ourselves on a number of occasions to keep the profile going. But you can't do that forever on your own money or on money that you have to raise. But we managed to get another general election in Alberta and what they missed was that all four provinces in Atlantic Canada have actually come out in favour of Senate reform. Nova Scotia Premier Hamm, this time a year ago, about two months before the election, came out and said he wanted to

elect his future Senator. That was followed by Premier Lord of New Brunswick who went public right after. He got few more headlines than Hamm, but he was actually the second Atlantic Premier to declare that he wanted to elect future Senators

FC: Alberta has always talked of a triple-E Senate and Bert led that discussion. Then we went through a process with Mulroney and the Meech Lake Accords, which never achieved that ideal. You hear complaints that PEI, for example, with a small population, would have the small amount of representation as Ontario. Do you think people will buy that?

BB: They did in 1992.

FC: Do you think they will buy that now?

BB: I have every belief that they would, but I'm not concerned about it. What I want to see happen is that we start a process where we democratize the Senate first, which just means that we want to convince the first ministers and the Council of Federation in August that one or more or all of them should start electing Senators. In the Constitution, it says those Senators represent the provinces in these numbers. We're saying, "Why don't you just elect them?" because 83% of Canadians in a CTV poll before the last federal election said that they want to see their Senators elected. We're saying, "Go ahead, elect your Senators," in spite of the fact the federal government will say you can't do that because we're going appoint them. Just go ahead and do it, just like Alberta did.

You get one or two more provinces to do it, politically they are going to be forced to react sooner or later. Our fear is that if the provinces ignore the situation long enough, the federal government will end up going ahead and democratizing the Senate but, like Link says, we'll end up with a mirror image of the House of Commons because the feds will elect them by the federal system. So your House of Commons and your Senate would be a mirror image of each other and we'd have exactly what we have now. We'd have one Prime Minister controlling both houses.

FC: Let's switch over to the last "E", an effective Senate. How do you define that, Link?

LB: I would define it in practical terms according to the powers that the Senate already has. The Senate can do practically anything, except introduce a taxation bill. It can veto a budget, it can veto anything. In one narrow area of constitutional amendment, it has suspension of veto only; otherwise its veto can be indefinite. You can picture pretty easily what would happen if, instead of staffing the Senate with loyal foot soldiers to the incumbent Prime Minister, suddenly people began showing up to answer to provincial populations in provincial elections and to provincial legislatures to a degree.

The Senate would have tremendous ability to intervene in the process of federal governments, in things like the sponsorship scandal, which was rumored for six years before anybody looked into it much. The Senate would hear about that and call witnesses immediately as it does in the United States and in other federal systems like Germany and Australia. They would say, "We hear that there are untendered contracts going down worth up to a billion dollars a year. Is that true?"

FC: Therefore why would Paul Martin want that situation?

LB: He wouldn't want it and the Prime Minister's Office especially wouldn't want it. But let's say there were Senate elections going on in British Columbia and Nova Scotia. How many MPs would they get out of there? Probably, going by memory, at least half a dozen. Now if they elect Senate nominees the way Alberta does, is it really worth it for Paul Martin to lose his government rather than appoint these people? He is within one of losing a confidence vote; he actually did lose a confidence vote for nine days and chose to ignore it.

But the question isn't whether he wants to, the question is whether he'll have to. I think that he would have to, any Prime Minister would. Moreover, if Harper and the Conservatives take over our national government and, Lord knows, stranger things have happened, they are already committed to appointing provincially elected Senators. John Williams, the Tory chair of the public accounts committee, told me, "I don't why know anybody in Ottawa among MPs or anyone else

who expects this present Senate appointment system to continue much longer. It will be democratized.”

FC: It has no credibility?

LB: It has none, and you cannot run a federal system properly with one house.

FC: A lot of Canadians were quite upset with the budget deal with the NDP and the Liberals. Would a Senate be able to stop that type of thing? The NDP generally is on record as saying, “Just get rid the Senate.”

BB: Without a Senate there are no checks and balances at all

LB: That is what democracy is, especially federal democracy

FC: But would an effective Senate have slowed down this kind of a deal?

BB: Perhaps, it's always hard to predict. Canada is generally a left-wing country; two-thirds of the last national election was a left-centered vote, between the Bloc, the NDP and the Liberals. Let's face it.

FC: The NDP is opposed to having a Senate. What about the other parties? Where is the Bloc Québécois on this?

BB: The two parties that matter most are the Liberals and the Conservatives, and they both endorse the idea of a reformed Senate. The Liberals are all for it, in fact they want it perfectly designed before they do anything. The Conservatives understand, I think, that democracy functions on checks and balances and in order to reform the Senate you have to start and see where it ends up, rather than trying to microscript the whole thing in advance. But everybody that's likely to ever form a government in this country is in favor of Senate reform, and so are most of the provinces.

FC: So having an effective Senate brings some fiscal breaks to government?

BB: It's hard to say. I'm would certainly not want to promise that would happen. But what I suspect would happen is this, that you have two levels of government—and by government I am speaking narrowly in the sense of cabinet—you have two sovereign levels of cabinet, federal and provincial. They both have huge administrative interests and so when the Council of the Federation meets and when the first ministers meet with the Prime Minister, the whole discussion is over how much money are we going to get, not any thought of provincial responsibility for holding their spending in check. Instead of any responsible approach you always have this attitude which says, “Well how can we get more money from someone else?”

A Senate will have no administrative stake at all; it doesn't represent provincial cabinets, although it would certainly be sympathetic to them, I think, and it doesn't represent the federal cabinet and it has no administrative turf to defend. It is a possible chamber of national discussion and decision-making in this country that is capable of saying on principle what is good for the country. Should we have an equalization program which rewards failure? Should we have a Medicare system in which nobody apparently is in charge and nobody runs it? I think a national Senate in which they can't be minister of anything, not provincially, not federally, is more likely to say, “Wait a sec, is this good for the country, this extra 4.5 billion here, that Jack wants to spend, is this actually good for the country?”

FC: Do you think the NDP will change its mind on having a Senate?

BB: Do you mean provincially in Manitoba? Yes, it will. Federally it doesn't matter so much, but they will start running in Senate elections, how can they not?

LB: If you want proof of it, look at the polls that the Canada West Foundation has taken over the last six years. Over 80% of the NDP voters have been drawn to an elected Senate.

FC: The NDP power brokers, the public sector unions?

BB: They can only get away with what they are doing for so long. The people who oppose Senate reform want to look at the worst possible scenario. They say it is the deadlock of the government

which means the country will self-destruct in a matter of days. There will be no food left, no transportation left, no water left, nothing—it will just absolutely self-destruct. What we think will happen in an elected Senate is that the Senators will start to say, “Hey, if I don't support or oppose this bill that is coming forward in the House of Commons, my people in my province aren't going to re-elect me.” So what's the simplest way to do that? Maybe if I talk to the MPs from my province and say, “Why don't you guys amend this thing before we in the Senate have to defeat it or amend it ourselves?” Because they have both powers.

I think the logical thing that you would see happen is that maybe once they would have to actually veto a bill to show that they meant business. But after that there might be some polite discourse among Senators and MPs, who will say, “You know the only problem we have is this part of the bill, so if you guys will amend it we'll let it come through the Senate and we'll vote for it, and change some words like we do now because we're great wordsmiths and we'll make it look a little better, but we won't change the content because you'll have already satisfied our concerns and at the same time we can say we can say that we took the bill, examined it, changed a few things, and let it pass.” That's what will actually happen most of the time.

But the people who want to oppose this thing and are connected to any kind of government at all will throw up the biggest scarecrow they can. They have done it in every government for the last twenty years. We are slowly overcoming them because every time it's exposed, despite their lack of knowledge about the Senate, the number of people in Canada who would like to elect their Senators actually go up every single year. That has been going on since we started with a handful of people.

FC: A country that is very similar to Canada is Australia. Betty, do you have any comments on how it has worked there? In the last election the governing party now has control of the Senate as well and they are expecting the ability to make some bolder changes.

BU: We've been asked by people if we are favoring any model and we have heard, “We don't want what the United States has.” Some Canadians identify themselves by what they are not. We've used Australia's model and Germany's model; there are many other models you can look at. But in Australia they have their problems. Spending was a huge problem, labour governments were forced to get it under control. They are functioning, they are getting the business of the country done without this so-called gridlock and deadlock that people throw up as roadblocks.

On the other hand, given the bilateral approach of the Prime Minister making special deals with each province in Canada, and now municipalities and cities getting this new power, we heard it wouldn't be unexpected if the Prime Minister said, “Well cities should start electing people they want to be appointed to the Senate, just bypassing the Premiers.” The Senate is in fact a creation of the provinces so its mandate is to reflect and look after the interests of the provinces. We asked the same questions everywhere we went. “Have your Senators ever come and consulted with your government on any issue of importance?” The answer in almost every case was, “No.” In Québec, the answer was one word, “Never.” The exception was Newfoundland where the Senator was the father of the minister that we met with.

FC: Can Québec be turned around on Senate reform?

BU: They said reforming the Senate is not a burning issue for them and they wouldn't consider it without dealing at the same time with Québec's specificity. We said our mandate with our trip here isn't to discuss equal, we just want to make the first step happen.

FC: One of the biggest policy disasters of the last century was the National Energy Program. Would the Senate have stopped that?

LB: It would now. It couldn't then, but right now you've got B.C. coming on steam wanting to start drilling off the coast and they're determined to do it. They have every right to do it. You've got Newfoundland with Hibernia, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and

both arguing over how much of the offshore shelf they would each own. There are enough provinces right there. Saskatchewan is number two in energy. Now you've got enough votes in the Senate with an elected Senate to stop another natural energy program getting off track.

FC: Alberta has a lot of oil wells. There are people in Manitoba who see equalization as a way for us to share in Alberta's good fortune.

LB: Are those people willing to share their hydro-electric power with us for free?

BB: I could see Albertans seeing this as another way to protect their own interests.

LB: From Alberta's point of view, if Alberta really were alone in its energy interests, yes. Although as Bert and Betty point out, it's not. It wasn't even in 1982, but they are right, certainly the interest is spread around the country outside Ontario and Québec. But let's say it were alone. No federal system in the world is going to give Alberta much protection against a 90% gang-up from the rest of the country. My earlier point is really the relevant one. What would be useful is a national forum in which provinces and provincial interests are paramount, in which national discussion can take place.

If you walk to the House of Commons, you've got left-wing parties against supposedly right-wing parties yelling at each other in team fashion across the floor. Properly developed, the Senate wouldn't begin this way, but it could be developed this way. It should be sitting, as Alberta has proposed, in regional delegations regardless of party and then you can have provincial delegation, regional delegation around the room and you can discuss things. I never get too upset if I see a parliamentarian change his mind on most things. It's kind of nice, that's why we have debates, so that people can think about it and say, "Well, I hadn't realized that, maybe I should change my vote." That is actually necessary to intelligent governance and I think its much more possible in a provincially elected and reformed Senate than it is in the House of Commons or in the present Senate for that matter.

I think what will happen is that people will at some point rediscover that there is a national interest and it isn't necessarily served by an ever-expanding state. It's very hard, we've seen the Tories try to make this point in the Commons and they get driven off it. Why? Because they are trying to fight an election against people like the Liberals and the NDP who won't admit it, the bigger government the better, right? Now we see the Harper Conservatives moving over on Medicare, on this, on that, on Kyoto, on childcare, it doesn't matter. If the Liberals give it away, the Tories keep giving it away. Because of electoral competition that wouldn't happen in the Senate.

FC: One of our concerns here is equalization reform. We see equalization as harmful to Manitoba the way it is set up right now. How do you see a Senate involving itself in this process?

BB: Monitoring. We would be monitoring, of course. Is there anyone left in this country that can remember what happen when the National Energy Program went into place? Most of our oil rigs and everything were manufactured where? In Ontario, and they killed the goose that laid the golden egg by saying that Alberta to sell its oil at a price far below the market value in the rest of the country. When Alberta's industry went down because the people wouldn't invest in drilling rigs anymore and they wouldn't invest in drilling holes in the ground trying to find something they were having to sell below market price, they moved to the United States and started drilling holes down there, and Ontario's economy went down the tubes. Do they think that wouldn't happen again?

FC: The country needs some pretty complicated policy reforms. If you throw a Senate into the mix, is it going to slow down the process of fixing some of these broken institutions?

BB: It might make the process a little bit better. What could be more disastrous than having one man control all the decisions in this country, period. Haven't we had enough of watching the softwood lumber dispute never get settled satisfactorily? Aren't we sick and tired enough of watching our Prime Minister of the day destroy the

Atlantic fishery completely, to where we don't even know if it can ever come back in our lifetimes or in our children's lifetimes? Those are just two of the things they have done that are really massively wrong.

How about the fact that they let Québec's interests, for which Québec has been fighting for two generations now, with the five principles which Québec wants, are all something that they have the right to have, except that they don't have the right to have their own country? They are fighting for their own country because they don't have the five principles of sovereignty which they wanted, which the constitution gives them. That is control over the education, health, manpower, immigration and one or two others that are important to Québec. Alberta is actually an ally in all those things. That's what a reformed Senate would do, keep the government out of the areas of sovereignty that the constitution says that are the provinces'.

FC: We argued that recently. If you respected the constitution, you wouldn't have the federal government in daycare and healthcare and all these areas. Why is that better?

BB: It's better because it's smaller. I think the national interest is less government in this country, without any doubt.

FC: Do you have a problem with the federal government getting involved in city finances?

LB: Realistically, if you wanted to contain federal spending in this country, could even an opposition MP bring this up in the House of Commons? No. Why? Because, as Bert says, what we do in this country is elect a dictator for four years. His only requirement is that every four years people all over the country or in enough of the country feel that little twinge of concern which causes them to put him back in and that's it. That's the end of democracy in the country. After that it's back to, "We are going to do this, this and this and this one over here will get us through the next election, that one here will blow up the PMO and the power of the central government. That is how we run this federation.

Is there were any way in which somebody in a position of decision could stand up in a House of Parliament and say equalization is a crappy way to run the economies in the eastern Prairies and the Atlantic provinces? It's a stupid way. On the one hand, it subsidizes people to create jobs and on the other hand, through EI and various other things, we subsidize people not to do that. Is there not a positive way in which everybody can come out ahead, like some business tax concessions? Right now it can't even be mentioned in Parliament because nobody dares do that. We saw what happened to Stephen Harper when he said there is a culture of defeatism in the Atlantic provinces. He's not allowed to say so because of the electoral consequences. He's got to run for seats.

FC: Why do you assume that the federal government would give back these lucrative tax levers like income tax and the GST?

LB: If there is a national house in which all of these fundamental questions can be called into question, we can possibly reorganize. We always forget in this country that Parliament is our defense against the government. We always think that Parliament is the government. No, Parliament is there to control the government, guide the government and restrain the government. The House of Commons ceased to do this so long ago that I can't even remember it ever doing its job. What the Senate offers us is a new forum in which provincially elected people don't answer to party leaders in the House of Commons. People with some kind of national vision can get to a national House of Parliament and say, "No, we're not co-operating with the government on this. We are going to demand that the government clean this up because all this is abusive." Whether it is economic policy or social policy, it hardly matters.

BB: You asked this question a little while back: "Why would Paul Martin want this"? When the people of the provinces demonstrate by holding future elections that they want to elect a Senate, then Paul Martin will want it because he will have no choice. You can either have an armed revolution or you can do it by peaceful means. The peaceful means is what we have been trying to do for twenty years now, and the people are on our side.

The people are on the side of electing the Senate, all the provinces have to do is go ahead and say, "We know we are going to get ridiculed by the national press, just like Alberta has been ridiculed three times in a row. But our votes have gone up three times in a row." We had 650,000, then we had 880,000 and in the last election we had 2,200,000. In Alberta, after the national press said it was a waste of money and a waste of time, we got more votes just for the winning candidates than all 83 MLAs collected in the last election. Think about that.

People said, "Well you only got 20% of the people. Those who went to the polls didn't use the Senate ballot." When did you see a government elected by 80% of the electorate before? Yet the press is still trying to denigrate a democratic function that the people are saying they want. We are willing to vote, we are willing to pay the bill to do it and everything else. We are telling provinces like Manitoba or to whomever else we speak that it can be done for a fraction of the cost that Alberta spent.

All the provincial government has to do is say we are going to hold a Senator-in-waiting election during the next provincial election and then go ahead and print the ballot and tell the electoral officers they're going to have one more ballot to count and no we're not going to pay any extra money. You're going to do this one or we'll fire you and get another electoral officer. You could do it for probably for \$100,000, not for 2 or 3 million dollars or whatever.

BU: I would just like to make one comment and that was about the federal government doing everything that they are doing. You cannot possibly govern the country effectively when you are that big. The brain drain is real. We all know bright young people who have moved the States to get away from Canada's crushing tax burden. In 2000, I ran against Anne McClellan in Edmonton West and while door knocking I heard the same story over and over, especially from young people. People are saying, "We are both working as hard as we can, we can't work any harder, but we are not getting ahead, we are falling behind, taxes are killing us." We need somebody who will look at issues like this and with an effective Senate we can argue that the federal government should not be in all of these jurisdictions in the country. But they are. Their mandate has just grown bigger and bigger and taxed the people. We have taxation and no representation.

LB: We are not even proposing a radical change here, we're proposing a slow-motion Senate reform in which provinces start to elect. It will be five years before they get 36 elected Senators, provided nobody gets run over by a bus or dies of a heart attack, just to fill the vacancies that will come. They will take over eight years to get a majority in the Senate. Anytime during those eight years, we

haven't changed the constitution, they haven't even proposed to change the constitution. We can back off this thing and say we elected a bunch of Senators and they turned out to be worse than the guys who were appointed, let's not do this anymore. What has been lost by trying democracy?

FC: Any last comments?

LB: People, this country is getting more into a more and more serious political malaise. There is a sense of deadlock all over the place at all levels and when you look at it, the only way to reform the federal government of this country that is available is the Senate, because it has never been used. It is sitting there like a blank slate for someone to write better things on. It would be so easy for Premiers with any kind of will to change that institution and make it affective, it is almost mind-blowing, and there is not another way to reform the system.

BU: We will be preparing a report which will be presented for discussion in August at the Council of the Federation meeting and refers to the malaise that Link talked about. There's no doubt it does grip the country. We need the premiers to be new Fathers of Confederation, to start by fixing the democratic deficit that truly exists in Canada by going down this road and agreeing that they will take this first tentative step toward doing something to fix democracy. That would be agreeing to all elect Senators

BB: I would just like the rest of Canada to understand that Albertans are the most generous province in this country. We are contributing somewhere between 9 and 14 billion dollars a year more to Confederation than we take out of it. I think they should also understand that the last time they took a little bit too much. They killed the oil industry in Alberta and subsequently killed the industry in Ontario and the whole country went into a recession. If we are going to keep on producing energy for all of North America, let alone for Canada, we have to have billions of dollars to reinvest in oil sands. We'd be very foolish to take one dollar too much until those projects become not viable in the eyes of international bankers and they say "We are going to cancel this project."

Once you start doing that then we lose all incentive to continue producing more and more energy. If we do that, until we find alternative energy, this country grinds to a halt. There is no question about it. Manitobans can't afford to do without gasoline anymore than Albertans can. Neither can Ontario. We have to keep the thing running. All we are saying is we want a voice, a vote and if necessary a veto in Parliament to keep some idiot from doing the same thing all over again.