

THE SENATE

Dave Broadfoot

The Senate was conceived in the early days of Rome. Later on in Roman history, it was in the Senate that Julius Caesar came to an abrupt and sticky end. And the demise of Caesar seems to have left a stigma on the institution that exists to this very day.

Down through our own history, for the vast majority of Canadians the Senate has always been an enigma. It is my opinion that it simply does not make sense for Canadians to go on, generation after generation, with a stigma on their enigma.

The method by which a man takes his seat in the House of Commons is clear for all to see. It is by belabouring long and hard, building his charisma, and rattling a tin cup. How a person makes his way into the Senate remains a puzzlement. Even the choosing of a new Pope in the Vatican is more open. The choice comes to a vote in the College of Cardinals, the ballots are then burned, a puff of white smoke rises like a mushroom from the chimney, and everyone gasps with relief. In Ottawa, when a new Senator is appointed, there are no ballots. There isn't even a puff of smoke. All we get are the usual fumes from the E. B. Eddy pulp mill across the river.

How does a person become a senator? What are the qualifications of a senator? Why are there so many jokes about the Senate? What is a bag-man?

We in the New Apathetic Party believe that "Senate education" in our public schools can rid this country, once and for all, of the ignorance surrounding this delicate subject, thus enabling parents of the future to face their children without fear whenever this subject is raised in mixed company. Otherwise, we will continue to have the kind of painful confrontation between father and son, such as we find in this scene in a typical Ottawa home:

Son:

Dad?

Father:

Yes, son.

Son:

Remember when you asked me to think about what I wanted to be when I grew up?

Father:

Yes.

Son:

Well, I thought about it, Dad, and you know what I want to be?

Father:

A fireman?

Son:

No, Dad, you're not even warm. I want to be just like you when I grow up.

Father:

Like me? But son, I'm a *Senator*.

Son:

I know you are, Dad, and I want to be one too.

Father:

But *why*? *Why* would you want to do this to your mother and me? You always seemed so ambitious. We have always had such hopes and dreams for your future.

Son:

Maybe it's because I admire you so much, Dad. I want to follow in your footsteps. But I'm just not sure how I'm supposed to go about it.

Father:

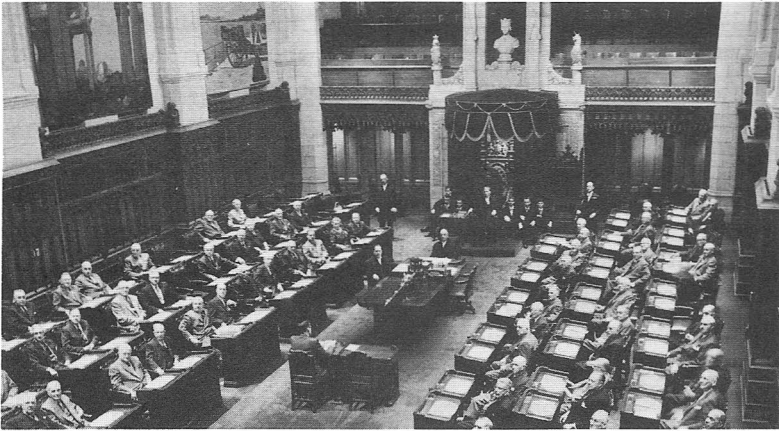
Frankly, son, you're still too young to know about that. Wait till you're a little older. We'll have another little chat someday. Now, run down the street and play with Justin.

Son:

Dad, I'm nineteen years old! I don't *want* to play with Justin. Can't you just give me a couple of hints, so I'll be able to . . . you know . . . kind of prepare myself for the job? Isn't there some school I can go to?

Father:

You don't have to go to school to become a Senator.



Son:

Well, isn't there some book I can read to help me?

Father:

A book?

Son:

You know . . . like *Everything You Always Wanted To Know About The Senate But Were Afraid To Ask*.

Father:

You don't have to read a book.

Son:

Maybe I should take a course in current events.

Father:

You don't have to know what's going on.

Scn:

What if I take up public speaking?

Father:

You don't have to be a speaker.

Son:

Gee, Dad, if you don't have to *learn* anything and you don't have to *read* anything or *say* anything, what *do* you have to do?

Father:

Sit down, son. I guess you're going to find out sooner or later anyway, and I'd rather have you hear it from your father than pick it up in the street. You remember when

you used to come to church with your mother and me?
Remember the old clergyman reading the verse: "Many are called, but few are chosen"? Well, that's the way it is with the Senate.

Son:

I don't understand.

Father:

One night, many years ago, I had a vision, and when I awoke from the vision, I turned to your mother and I said, "Martha, how would you like to sleep with a Senator tonight?" And she said, "Isn't it a little early to be talking shop?" And I said, "Martha, I've had a vision, and when the mailman calls today, I just *know* he will bring a letter asking me to become a Senator." And sure enough, the vision was fulfilled. The letter came that day. You see, son, becoming a Senator in Canada is a kind of mystic experience . . . a kind of holy happening. The only thing I could compare it to is the moment when Oral Roberts asks you to reach out and put your hand on the television set.

Son:

Gee, Dad, I didn't mean to make you cry.

Father:

That's all right, son. It's not easy to talk about such an experience. One day you're just an ordinary vice-president of an ordinary corporation, and the next day, you're sitting in that hallowed chamber.

Son:

You mean, it just happens like that . . . out of the blue . . . like an Act of God?

Father:

Oh, I wish *I'd* said that, son. An Act of God is exactly what it is.

Son:

But Dad, isn't there something I can do . . .

Father:

Yes, son. Run down the street and play with Justin.