incrementalism. It preferred the same kinds of methods used at a later stage in the Ottawa-Charlottetown round of constitutional negotiations. According to this approach, a government does not need a theory of liberalism or a vision of Canadian federalism. A government reads polls and plugs holes here and there. The French expression for this is “Parer au plus presé.”

In 1993, the language issue will become pressing and, in all likelihood, will be dealt with in a manner that will render our political life messy once again. That’s about all I know with some certainty in the first days of this new year.

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Quebec Report is a regular feature of Canada Watch.

Canada Watch welcomes submissions on issues of current national interest. Submissions should be a maximum of 1,000 words. The deadline for consideration in our March issue is Tuesday, February 23, 1993. Write or fax us at:

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that the prime minister defer Senate appointments until after the next federal election. He argues that the appointments issue is not legal or constitutional but moral: if it was wrong in 1984 for Liberal Prime Minister Turner to rubber stamp Trudeau’s appointments, then it must be just as wrong in 1992 for Mulroney to make a string of similar patronage appointments.

Chrétien is right that the prime minister is not required by law or constitutional imperative to accede to any of these demands. It is a different question whether he should.

**Politics, Patronage and Choices**

Although his power of appointment is unfettered, Mulroney has no mandate to reform the Senate unilaterally, even on an incremental basis, by conceding the “elected” element of the Triple E proposal. Were he to do so, his actions would confer a measure of democratic legitimacy on the Senate. Nor is a moratorium politically viable. With discussion of constitutional reform on hold indefinitely, why would the prime minister forfeit the right to make these appointments? A federal election must be held no later than November 1993. Should Mulroney agree to defer Senate appointments, there would be nothing to prevent a new governing party from filling those vacancies immediately after the election.

During the leadership debate of the 1984 election, Brian Mulroney pointed a finger at then Prime Minister Turner and shouted, in reference to Trudeau’s patronage appointments, that “you had a choice.” Turner went down to defeat in that election. Likewise, the people of Canada had a choice in October 1992, and they decided not to endorse the accord.

Now the prime minister has a choice. And it is purely political: a deluge of patronage appointments may compromise his party’s chances of re-election. But it would not be illegal, unconstitutional, or even contrary to parliamentary tradition in Canada.

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