

Peel Bury. Bk.

Neiman, Joan

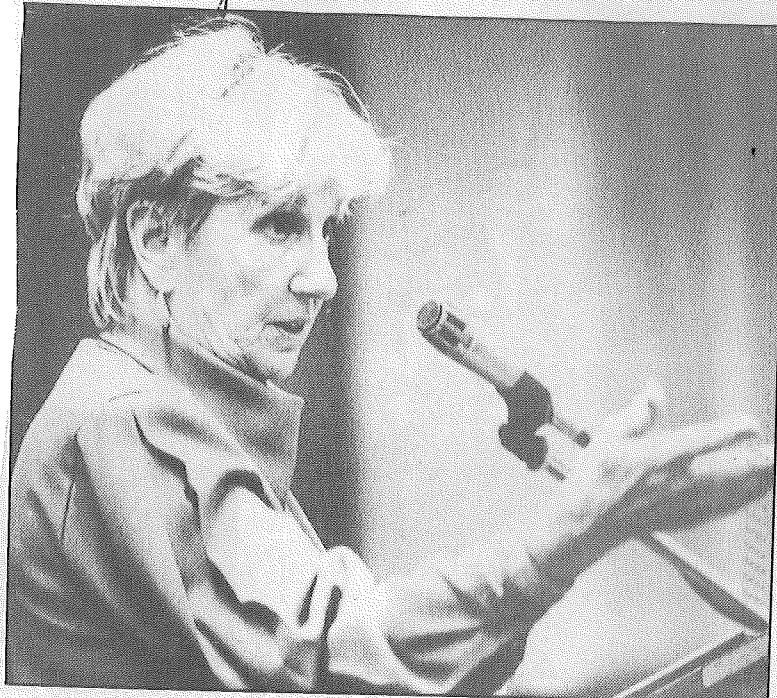


Photo by Richard Lautens

Peel's Senator Joan Neiman told about 75 members of Mississauga's Canadian Federation Of University Women that Canadians must send a clear message to our elected government representatives about what kind of Senate reform we want. The 17-year member of the Senate spoke at the University Of Toronto's Erindale Campus.

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Senator Joan Neiman speaks...

En route to Senate reform

Senator Joan Neiman says it's up to Canadians to tell the government what kind of Senate reform they want.

Neiman, a Caledon resident, successful lawyer and 17-year member

of the Senate, told the Mississauga chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women that members of the governing party elected to the House of Commons are the biggest roadblock to a freely elected Senate in the Canadian Parliament.

Speaking to about 75 group members at the University of Toronto's Erindale College Monday night, Neiman said that while members of the opposition parties in the House of Commons want an elected Upper House, government members are content to keep Senate reform on the back burner.

According to the British North America Act of 1867, the House of Commons and the Senate were granted virtually the same powers. The Senate was set up as a watchdog to oversee our elected government officials.

While House of Commons representatives are elected, senators are appointed by the prime minister and hold office until the age of 75. Armed with that kind of job security, said Neiman, senators have been known to be less than accountable to even the prime minister.

But while members of the governing party in the House of Commons are put under tremendous pressure to support the party line, the senators are no under no such obligation.

Sometimes the government uses the Senate to introduce a potentially controversial bill and test the political waters. Neiman recalled when a Quebec MP asked her to table a bill that would have seen marijuana no longer considered a narcotic.

"It caused an absolute storm and they thought I was nuts," she said.

Neiman agreed that Senate reform is necessary, voicing her own views on what steps need to be taken.