

Retirement Age for Senators

Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) acknowledged the contribution which the Canada Pension Plan committee, a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons, made to the preparation of this legislation. This committee held 51 meetings. It met many times during the Christmas recess and on a number of occasions it sat three times a day. Members of the Senate were conscientious in their attendance. I can think of many names: Senator Fergusson, the co-chairman; Senator Croll, one of the original members of the committee which sat in 1950 to make the proposal on which an old age security plan was based; Senator Hugessen; Senator McCutcheon, whose views I did not share but whose ability in understanding all the issues was beyond question. Such members of the other place made an outstanding contribution to the work of the Committee. There have of course been other valuable Senate committees on land use, employment, old age, and so on. In these and other directions I believe a good deal of necessary work for the development of parliamentary business can be done.

A good deal has been said about some of the recent appointments to the Senate. Unfortunately I have not had the privilege of getting to know many of these men. I know one, who was a classmate of mine. All I can say is this: the men I have met are men in the most able years of their lives, capable men who have had outstanding records in the fields they chose before they entered the public service. They have also made a contribution or rendered a service, perhaps, of some nature to their party. I do not think this in itself disqualifies them. They will be judged on their record in the Senate and as Members of Parliament in the broadest sense of the word "Parliament". Surely the appointment of such men does not deserve the kind of condemnation in such outlandish terms as we have heard.

Perhaps the answer is that there should be more balance in the selection of background when persons are chosen to go to the other place. One of the speakers who preceded me said there had never been a member of the socialist group which governed Saskatchewan appointed to the Senate. Well, I seem to recall that Mr. Coldwell was offered an appointment at one time and that he chose to decline it. I may be wrong. If it has been a matter of principle with their party not to participate in the Senate, I respect them for their principles. But they cannot have it two ways. If the appointments are offered, and they

[Mr. Francis.]

choose not to accept them, they cannot complain about no appointments being made.

• (3:20 p.m.)

It is quite true that we should work out a basis of more non-partisan selection and balance of representation of Members of the Senate; but the most important thing is that we should select able, conscientious people who have an interest in public affairs and are prepared to devote their time to them.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. Member permit a question? Did I understand him to say that we were complaining? None of our people have been complaining about not being appointed to the Senate. I think it was the hon. Member for Lake St. John (Mr. Lessard) who complained. We do not complain; we do not want to go there.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) for making quite clear the point I was making myself. I said that I respected them if it was their desire not to accept an appointment to the Senate; but I simply said it is not for any minority party to say that they have not a representative in the Senate when they have declined to accept such an appointment as a matter of principle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): The hon. Member for Antigonish-Guysborough (Mr. Stewart).

Mr. Francis: I have not finished yet, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Knowles: The Speaker thought you had gone to the Senate.

Mr. Francis: I do believe that in regard to the measures which are proposed it might be worth consideration if some limitation on retirement age could be made for those who elect to take the pension, which will be of the order of \$8,000 a year. I would think that such an election should be made fairly promptly, about the 75th birthday, and should not be an election left open at any age or any stage of the career of a member of the other place.

The Canadian Senate is to a considerable degree what Parliament makes it. In previous years it had a higher proportion of active members and it had a higher regard, apparently, in the eyes of many people in the community. The present measure, long overdue, is a very welcome step to bring into its ranks a higher proportion of younger and