

*Abolition of the Senate*

Ontario 39 per cent and the rest of the country 12 per cent. Will the bill of rights change that? Of course it will not.

I am glad to see the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Blais) and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray) in the chamber this evening. I will be dealing with them in committee in the near future to try to get a little more justice across Canada. They talk about human rights and protecting the individual. They are not kidding me. They will look after their votes before looking after anyone's rights.

**Mr. Blais:** How about Bristol Aerospace? How about the increase in Manitoba over the last year?

**Mr. McKenzie:** Bristol Aerospace is one of five aerospace firms in Manitoba to receive any part of the NFA contract to date, and it was a very small portion. I recently met with members of the other aerospace firms. They are very concerned that they will not even get a slight smell of any contract. The bill of rights is nothing but windowdressing.

In conclusion, thank heaven we have some responsible members in the other place to protect us from the Liberal Party and the half dozen or so remaining NDP who support them in trying to ram this thing through.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Maltais (Manicouagan):** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat reluctant to speak about the abolition of the Senate because I have not been a member of this House for very long. I would be tempted to share the views of my colleague for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) because when we are outside the House and hear people talk about the Senate often enough the impressions they give us are rather incomplete and somewhat tinged with negativism. I know that when people in my riding talk about the Senate the general impression is often that perhaps it is the most magnificent golden age club in the country, enjoying as it does permanent New Horizons projects and rather plush precincts. But people think like that because they are on the other side of the fence.

I think that perhaps the Senate is an institution whose operations ought to be completely overhauled because the fact is that it was established or at least set up at a time when institutions were very different from what they are nowadays.

We know that in the early days after the establishment of the Senate—and I have no intention of giving a lecture in political science to my colleague from Winnipeg North Centre who is probably much better informed than I am in that field—but at the outset the purpose of the Senate was to cool down the zeal of the elected representatives before the courtisans of kings and what not, so that now the role of the Senate compared with that of the elected House surely needs to be modernized if senators really want to meet contemporary requirements.

In that sense I suggest that the Pepin-Robarts report does make significant and challenging distinctions. Instead of endorsing outright the bill introduced by the hon. member for

Winnipeg North Centre, instead of abolishing the Senate altogether, perhaps it would be interesting to see what could be done with that institution. Of course the problem there now may be that the senators are usually appointed by the parties.

Because of this, there might be a power imbalance. However, one might view senatorial appointments more objectively if senators were chosen among outstanding men and women in various fields in Canada and appointed for five or seven-year periods like appointees to certain Crown corporations. It would probably be interesting to see some kind of continuity between the work of elected legislators and related studies made by those appointed rather than elected.

In other words, it would be quite easy for the House of Commons to agree unanimously to the appointment to the Senate of some well-known men and women for a given period, which is how some provincial legislatures appoint an ombudsman. Such appointments would have to be approved by a simple majority or else by two thirds of the members of the House. These people would act as senators for a given period, whether it be five, seven or ten years, and try to improve the bills that we often pass rather hastily because, in this day and age, we have a tendency to legislate quite a lot and very regularly, which may be overlooked, and it would be a good thing to have such a regulatory mechanism. When we consider the role of the Senate and the critical review of legislation, this could be a great improvement. First of all, there would be more time to analyse measures, and second, this could lead to better legislation, as we have seen in the past.

The second important point concerns investigations. Because of the nature of its responsibilities and its role, the Senate could be asked to conduct investigations. Even among present senators, there are some, as the previous speaker said earlier, who have a great experience of life, and it is wrong, in my opinion, to condemn them offhandedly by saying that they are just a club of senior citizens and that they are not effective. What is not effective is the operation of the Upper House, and the same can be said about the House of Commons, where all members have been elected, because many changes certainly need to be made. The operation of this House is certainly not really effective if we consider the work that our constituents expect of us. We should take it for granted that those who have been elected have some experience and give them very specific responsibilities.

The first definition that I gave earlier is the possibility to make critical analyses of measures with a view to improving them, the second would be the capacity to conduct investigations, and the third would involve regional representation, a most important aspect. Proportional representation was mentioned earlier. This is an extremely bad idea. The philosophy behind it is quite valid, but I believe that we should go further than proportional representation as concerns the Senate. I come from an extremely vast territory. I am the only member for an area of 600 miles by 1,250 miles. It seems to me that it