

that not destroy the independence of the Senate, to which my honourable friend has subscribed?

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Does my honourable friend ask why, if it is good for one-third of the membership of the Senate it is not good for three-thirds?

Hon. Mr. Roebuck: Exactly.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: That is a fair question, and I think that my proposals might have been somewhat different had I discussed these various points with a cross-section of my colleagues. Perhaps I can answer my honourable friend from Toronto-Trinity (Hon. Mr. Roebuck) by merely repeating that I believe the essential characteristic of the Senate is its semi-judicial capacity. This objective might be achieved with a membership of ninety-six senators as satisfactorily as by a membership of a hundred and two senators, just so long as appointments are distributed equitably throughout the geographical area of the country. When it comes to forming an opinion, however, even judges often rely on counsel to advance argument. I think that two-thirds of the membership of the Senate would represent a clear majority of semi-judicial opinion; at the same time I think it would serve a useful purpose to have people bring fresh current opinion into this house at regular intervals. This would be particularly true, should one of the factors which the government of the day might make use of in appointing senators be the desirability of reflecting the current interests of a provincial government. It would be difficult for life appointees to represent such current interests, because a provincial government might be replaced in three or four years. I do not deny that my proposal has its disadvantages, but I should like honourable senators to consider whether or not it might be worth while to have a constant stream of public opinion made available to the house.

I advance now with a good deal of hesitation to another proposal which I think the committee ought to discuss. I would suggest that consideration be given to the adoption of a policy providing that future appointments to the Senate be made subject to a compulsory retiring age. In offering this suggestion I almost feel as though I am being disloyal to some of my best friends in this chamber. Just to illustrate the flux of time I would point out that I was sworn in as a member of the Senate on March 2, 1943—along with the Honourable Senators Campoe and McIntyre—and that now I am forty-third on the list of the senators according to seniority. During my tenure of office I have had no greater friends—friends whom I have looked up to and respected—than those over

the age of seventy-five. In passing, however, I would suggest that the compulsory retiring age be seventy-five, and that upon retirement pensions be provided from a contributory pension fund, and that the recipient could elect that half his pension be paid to his dependent on a basis similar to that which is in effect for Supreme Court judges. These proposals have to do with the future and not with present members; but, as honourable senators are aware, on more than one occasion the wife of a senator has suffered great hardships when left stranded by his death.

I also suggest that consideration be given to substituting for the position of "Leader of the Government in the Senate" some new machinery that would enable Senate members to be better informed on all aspects of government policy, and which at the same time would provide the Senate with leadership of its own choosing.

An Hon. Senator: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: While I have done my best in the position I hold in the Senate, I feel that a house, comprised of 102 members of inquiring minds, should be provided with more detailed information than has been the case during my tenure of office.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: And during the tenures of the other leaders.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: If the Senate has to depend entirely on one man, it seems to me that it could not have had a better man for leader than, say, the late Senator Dandurand, the Right Honourable Arthur Meighen, or my immediate predecessor, the honourable senator from Kootenay East (Hon. Mr. King).

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: They brought to this house a very wide knowledge of public affairs. I served under the leadership of the honourable gentleman from Kootenay East, and I appreciate all that he did; nevertheless I believe that the present system does not permit senators to obtain all the information they should have on the complex matters dealt with by parliament today. Let me try to illustrate what I mean. The Legislature of Nova Scotia has 37 members, of whom eight or nine are cabinet ministers, at all times able to answer questions asked in the house about their respective departments. Ontario has a legislature of 90 members and I believe that about fifteen of them are cabinet ministers. The House of Commons, composed of 262 members, has in addition to the Prime Minister 18 other cabinet ministers and 13 parliamentary assistants, a total of 32 persons specially qualified to furnish information on government policy