

Senate Role in Parliamentary System

wise men of the nation are the ones who are appointed to the Senate.

When it comes to drawing a parallel between young and old people, some verses from a great French poet may serve as a rather good illustration of the problem raised by the different set of values cherished by young and old.

I remember some verses from the poem: "Booz endormi" by Victor Hugo. Booz was sleeping near sheaves of wheat. Here is what Victor Hugo wrote:

Les femmes regardaient Booz plus qu'un jeune homme. Car le jeune homme est beau, mais le vieillard est grand.

If the young have qualities, but their elders have theirs also. And Victor Hugo said:

Et l'on voit de la flamme aux yeux des jeunes gens—

It is true that as a rule young people are full of spirit and life, and that is as it should be.

But he added:

Mais dans l'œil du vieillard, on voit de la lumière.

If we need the eager strength and enthusiasm of youth, we also need the controlled strength and enthusiasm, if cool at times, of those nearing the end of a life filled with many past achievements and efforts, which have after all borne fruit.

But in this matter—

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Mr. Ross Whicher (Bruce): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat, I would like to congratulate the mover of the motion. Looking at its wording, one can see it has much to commend its being passed by the House. However, I cannot congratulate him on the speech he made, which was completely political. He was crying because there are not many members of the NDP in the Senate. The reason is that appointments are made according to the population of the country, and we have in Canada many more Liberals of ability than we have among the supporters of the NDP. However, we did have an NDP member in the Senate, and no doubt there will be other members of that party in it in the future.

• (5:40 p.m.)

I congratulate the member on what he said. As I understood it, he suggested that a com-

[Mr. LeBlanc (Rimouski).]

mittee be set up to investigate all aspects of the Senate. I agree with this, Mr. Speaker, because there is no doubt that we are the most over-governed country in the world. According to the last census figures there are less than 21 million people in this country; yet we have 102 members of the Senate, 264 Members of the House of Commons and 634 members of provincial legislatures. We have municipalities with councillors and aldermen, boards of education, public utilities and, in some areas, county councils. In rural Ontario it is a most unfortunate citizen indeed who has not six or seven bodies for whom to vote. In addition to these elected bodies we have the Lieutenant Governors of the provinces and the Governor General of Canada. Over-riding the whole legislative system is the Queen.

I think I am correct in saying that as far as Canada is concerned, with all due respect to the Indians, we have far too many chiefs and not enough Indians. Let us consider some examples. The province of Saskatchewan has 962,000 people, about half the population of the cities of Toronto and Montreal, but it is allowed 13 members of the House of Commons, six Senators and 59 members of the provincial legislature. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to that great grain-growing province, that is simply too much government. There are in addition the municipalities, county councils, public utilities, etc.

My own province of Ontario is the most densely populated in the country, with about 7½ million people. We have 88 members of the House of Commons, 24 Senators and 117 members of the legislature. There are also the Toronto city council, the metro council, the hydro commission and the public and separate school boards. One does not have to delve too deeply to appreciate that we are over-governed.

If the motion of my hon. friend would bring this state of affairs to the attention of the general public so that the Senate—and I give this only as a hypothetical situation—might be abolished or changed, or that the other governing bodies might be restricted, I would support it.

I had the privilege last summer of flying over the great and beautiful province of Prince Edward Island. It has a population of only 110,000 people, but it has four Senators compared with 24 for Ontario which has 7½ million people, or Quebec with 6 million. Surely, Mr. Speaker, there is room for change here. It is time the government set up a com-