

*Retirement Age for Senators*

I anticipated that the provisions of this bill would have been much wider in respect of Senate reform than they in fact are. The retirement age of Senators is of definite concern to me. As a result of the passage of this measure, Senators appointed after it becomes law will be required to retire upon reaching age 75, and Senators who are now Members of that other place will be allowed to stay for as long as they wish or take advantage of the retirement opportunity. This provision is both annoying and discouraging.

The next time I return to my constituency I must discuss the future welfare of several of my constituents who have been retired at 65, in good health and capable of working. Many of these people do not have sufficient finances to continue to live in a reasonable fashion. These people want to work, but because of their age they are unable to do so.

On the other side of the picture we have Senators who have for many years received high incomes and in a great number of cases are still directors of companies. While it is true that many people of 75 and 80 years of age are capable of working, many thousands of others, including farmers, wish to retire but cannot do so because they have not been contributing to pensions and do not have sufficient money to do so.

I am not afraid to admit that I have on occasion gone to different Senators asking for their advice on various subjects. I realize that there are many intelligent men who are members of that place. I do not suggest that I have always accepted the advice given, because I have not; but it is my opinion that individuals who are appointed to the Senate should be appointed for specific periods of time. Those who are now members of that other place will by the provisions of this bill be required to retire at age 75. In my opinion the new appointees to the Senate should not be allowed to remain there after they have reached age 70. By this very fact we are giving them five years more grace than we give anyone in industry or other commercial institutions in this country.

● (4:50 p.m.)

I have done some reading on this subject, although probably just enough to confuse the issue more than anything else. I have also checked with some of the representatives in Ottawa of other governments to find out what kind of Senates they have in their countries. Jamaica has a Senate. I know Jamaica is a very small country but Senators there are appointed for the length of the

life of Parliament. Appointments are made to the extent of one third, plus one, of the membership by the opposition, and by the government to the extent of two thirds less one. Senators serve without any pay. I inquired whether the members of the Jamaican Senate look after the business of the country and I was told that they do just as well as members of their House do.

I have also read an article by Lord Campion in which he deals with the Senates of some of the Commonwealth countries. He has this to say in part:

As for the Commonwealth, the principle of life nomination found a place in the two earliest Dominion constitutions; that of New Zealand (1852) and that of Canada (1867). In the early constitutions of the Australian states (which are 50 years older than that of the Australian Federal Commonwealth) the Legislative Councils of New South Wales and Queensland were based on nomination for life. It is only in Canada that nomination survives. In New Zealand, nomination was retained, after the reduction of the life period to a term of seven years in 1891, until the long threatened abolition of the Council was effected. Queensland has abolished her Legislative Council completely, and New South Wales has replaced the method of nomination by election for 12 years by the joint vote of the existing Council and lower chamber. In some of the other Commonwealth countries nomination is combined with other methods for the constitution of a portion of the second chamber—in South Africa, for one quarter of the Senate; in the Indian Council of States for 15 out of 250; in Ceylon for one half the Senate.

The method of nomination for life was devised in what was for its period the reasonable hope of producing a "strong" second chamber capable of "standing up to" the popular House. It was to work through the prestige conferred on its members. In progressive Europe, as popular election became the sole source of political power, most countries which wished to keep their second chambers "strong" acted as if they had anticipated Goldwin Smith's dictum about the vanity of supposing that "power will allow itself to be controlled by impotence" and exchanged nomination for election. Meanwhile, in countries which have not particularly valued a strong second chamber, the survival of the method of nomination has been helped by its patronage value to the political parties.

In Canada the method of life nomination has worked out in a way which would surprise the Fathers of Confederation, could they see it. They wanted a Senate that was independent and above party. Instead, Senators have, from the beginning, been chosen on strict party lines—with the result that in the early years of a government the Senate, largely chosen by the previous government, has shown itself recalcitrant; but, when the steady filling of vacancies by partisans of the government in power has had time to do its work, the Senate has been all that a government supported by the representative House could want. In a country remarkable for long lived administrations, the pattern has been: bicameralism in the first years of a government's life, unicameralism in the remainder.

[Mr. Whelan.]