

*Retirement Age for Senators*

**Mr. Orlikow:** It may take 1,000 years.

**Mr. Francis:** I have listened to hon. Members opposite and tried to understand and summarize the points they have made in debate. They have made the observation that the other place was to represent minorities, whether they were linguistic, racial or geographic minorities. They made the observation that it was to take the sober second thought—I think it was Sir John A. Macdonald who used that expression first—on the legislative processes to check impetuous legislation which might be enacted by Parliament.

Others have said in very derogatory terms that the institution of the Senate provides an opportunity for the Government of the day to make changes in its ranks by retiring—as they put it, and this is a more kind expression—Members who had served their time in the House of Commons. Then we have had a series of comments reflecting on the services, real or alleged as the case may be, to the various party organizations by appointees to the Senate.

I have listened to some of the proposals for reform that have come forward. They have been far ranging indeed. For example, the hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Nesbitt) said we should have some Members of the Cabinet in the other place. He elaborated on the parliamentary and cabinet system in the United States and felt that by taking a proportion of Cabinet Ministers from the other place we could have the best of both worlds, having some members chosen on the basis of their ability and others on the basis of their seats in the representative House of Commons.

We have seen another proposal to have provinces name members to the other place, or to have provincial-wide elections with a slate of Senators from each province.

Many of these proposals if adopted, and in the terms offered, would of necessity involve a fundamental change in the nature of our cabinet. To choose hon. members of the other place this way would have, as a corollary, greater responsibility in the Cabinet itself. It would mean that the proportions of the Cabinet between this House and the other House would have to be carefully examined within the complex framework of the delicate balances that have to be observed within our constitution and parliamentary practice, and would make the task of choosing the cabinet very difficult. This does not mean to say that such suggestions are not worthy of merit, and maybe ultimately some of them will have to be considered.

[Mr. Francis.]

Among objections to the other place have been three that I have been able to sort out. The first is the general lack of activity. But surely the measure now before the House to bring about an infusion of younger members, a greater proportion of them into the Senate, would go some distance to meeting that objection.

The second objection is that the Senate is not elected, and on principle many Members object to something that is not elected. The process of government, certainly in a democracy, must give primary responsibility to elected representatives. But the Civil Service is not elected. There are very many people serving important and useful roles in government who are not elected, who are selected and appointed, and there are a very wide variety of tasks, which are a very important part in the government of this country, that could be conducted by the other place if the opportunity were presented.

The third basic objection which I have heard—and this does not make me worry too much—is the charge that certain hon. members of the Senate have displayed most deplorable conduct in matters of conflict of interest. Conflict of interest in many situations is totally wrong. I for one do not like to hear of a situation where certain hon. members of the other place sit in on judgment of bank charters and appear to be motivated by personal reasons in approaching their decisions. If anyone believes conflict of interest is exclusively a problem of the Senate, he should think again. Think of the Province of Ontario. Look at the investigation going on into the Securities Commission of that Province where Members of the Commission staff and their immediate families are now facing accusations of a serious kind. Consider the Province of Saskatchewan which was ruled for a number of years by Members belonging to the party in the corner opposite. Again, conflicts of interest arose which resulted in proceedings before the courts. There is not a Member in this House who has served on a municipal council who cannot recall instances of conflict of interest at the municipal level.

There was an interesting item in yesterday's *Ottawa Citizen*. It referred to something which took place in the Province of Quebec; but similar examples could be given from any other province. This happened in Deschênes, a village which apparently has a one-man police force, and it seems that the property owners had a little quarrel with this one-man police force. I am quoting.