

*Senate Role in Parliamentary System*

worked for their party? Would that prevent them from having the qualifications required to do their task properly as senators? Let us not forget that a member for Parliament belongs to a party and that as long as the present system of political parties last we will not be able to work without taking that into account. Is it not also a most honest game? And if it is played according to the rules, I do not see any thing wrong with it.

However, I do congratulate the hon. member for his motion, a very substantial one, in my view. Every one of its points is of great importance. Once again, I am surprised that the hon. member has dealt with only one aspect of it, the last but one, that is the abolition of the Senate.

I am convinced that the other aspects of his motion were well-founded and very objective, showing the way for concrete and effective ways to improve the organization of the Senate.

From another standpoint, I wonder, in spite of the soberness of the wording of his motion, if the hon. member has not submitted something that should be considered in reverse order, that is from the end to the beginning, if we are to deal with the matter in an intelligent, sensible and serious manner.

• (5:30 p.m.)

I wonder if we should not rather endeavour to tackle the matter of the abolition of the Senate, as well as other very serious related problems, in a more comprehensive and logical way, going right to the heart of the matter. I also wonder why we should not follow a practice that has been followed for several years within the Canadian government. That method has passed the test in spite of the criticisms of some people and it has been recognized by most Canadian thinkers and serious businessmen.

A few years ago, after 1960, task forces and Royal Commissions have been set up. I think they have shown their worth. To the best of my recollection, the Glassco Royal Commission on Government Organization finalized its work.

The members of this Commission studied the whole public administration system. The study was comprehensive and dealt with essentials. Later on other commissions examined administration in detail. Their approach was more concrete and more analytical than synthetic, which in my opinion should come first. These commissions studied secondary and less important aspects of the problem

that the Royal Commission on Government Organization had failed to analyse. I refer particularly to the Royal Commission on Taxation, to the Montpetit Commission which studied postal administration, to the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission which made the extensive and very important survey on bilingualism and biculturalism.

I wonder if this process could not instead be the basis of a recommendation to the government to study our parliamentary institutions as a whole, including the Senate and the House of Commons, so that they be more efficient, more practical and more interesting for all Canadians.

For several years now we have come to believe again in the relative importance of the Senate. The Senate has some importance, but it might be a good idea to evaluate it once and for all. In many quarters, and this is the hon. member's opinion, people are under the impression that it is useless.

It is currently said that the Senate seems to rubber stamp all the decisions taken by the House. It is accused of inefficiency. However, for me, the Senate—as the House—is a body which confirms the freedom of speech of the Canadian citizens. That is therefore to the advantage of the Senate or the House.

Without being a traditionalist, because I am a Liberal, I would rather favour changes but provided safety is not jeopardized as some people have been saying for some time in some quarters.

However, one can say, given the past, that since the world began, wise men of any nation have always been of great importance and usefulness.

Let us also refer to the old popular saying, which still is valid and practical, yet reflecting a spirit of youth and renewal: "If the young knew, if the old could".

Although the future is said to belong to the young, and although the trend is that even the present is theirs more and more, we must not lose all sense of proportion. The young have some value, but the old too. We must not forget that. We must be able to draw a distinction between them and let them play their own role.

If I speak of elders, everybody will recognize that any Canadian citizen over 30 may be appointed to the Senate. Generally speaking, senators are old men, citizens who have already proven themselves often enough in the course of a fairly long career; in short, those we can classify in general among the