

Abolition of the Senate

on the positive aspects of the German system with the bundesrat.

I would take great umbrage at the kind of provincial governments we have in this country today, provincial fiefdoms, appointing senators who would then have a veto over the work of the House of Commons. That is the real danger in Senate reform. We must be sure that this blatantly and patently false decentralist theory of confederation is not perpetuated by a Senate which becomes the mere puppet of provincial governments.

An hon. Member: It is a puppet of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) now.

Mr. Collette: I shall not go on at length Mr. Speaker, except to say that—

Mr. Knowles: I thought you said you had matured.

Mr. Collette: I think I have matured but obviously that is a very subjective viewpoint. I will leave it to other members to make their judgment on that.

In November, 1980, the Senate itself issued its report on certain aspects of the Canadian Constitution. This report was the work of the people who are in that place now, the people who will be asked to pass the constitutional resolution. In viewing Senate reform they showed a remarkable attitude of self-sacrifice. They are willing to give of themselves, to reform their chamber in accordance with the realities of modern-day Canada. In no way do I subscribe to the almost despairing view of some hon. members opposite, especially those in the New Democratic Party in western Canada, who say the Senate will never allow any constitutional amendment to pass which will have an impact on its own future. I reject that quite forcefully, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, I should like to welcome the sentiments of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. This evening he made a very bold intervention which has an impact on national politics, and I hope that impact will not be lost on members here. He disagreed with the statements made by the Premier of Saskatchewan who has been dillying and dallying about supporting our constitutional resolution for these many months. But I do take exception to his almost irrational view that this federation, made up of a number of constituent parts, can only be served by the members of this House. That was not the intention of the Fathers of Confederation and hopefully it will not be the intention of all of us who are working together, irrespective of party, toward building a better Canada through constitutional reform.

● (2130)

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate tonight about abolishing the Senate and, although I am not the greatest protector of the Senate, I think we can say thank heavens we have the Senate today, we now know there are some responsible Liberals in this country. They are speaking out in the Senate and will oppose this Liberal-NDP coalition constitutional package. I will go into details

about that in a moment by putting on the record some comments made by these responsible Liberals in the other chamber.

I do not support the way the Liberals have run the Senate over the last number of years. Their full-time national party organizer is a member of the Senate. I do not approve of that at all. There are members in the Senate of other parties who work for their particular party when an election is on, but they are not there full time working for their party as are certain Liberals.

I must give some credit to the Senate for the work they do in their committees, some of which travel across the country. One study in which I have taken some interest is the one on the economic conditions in Canada. The Senate committee involved went into great length about the exodus of capital from this country and our political climate. Their report showed that starting in 1975 there was a massive exodus of capital from Canada because of the nationalization of the potash industry by an NDP government and outlined the damaging effects that had right across the country. It set off a signal in the United States for people to be very careful sending money up here for investment purposes. The trend of investment money leaving Canada started in 1975. Many people think that nationalizing an industry is a wonderful thing. It is not a wonderful thing because it scares investment out of the country; it does not attract investment. This study on what happened when an NDP government nationalized an industry in Canada was excellent.

Very good studies have been done on the poor and the aged by the Senate. Although these excellent studies have been done, it is unfortunate the Liberal government ignores most of them. They just gather dust on shelves. If the Liberal government would just pay a little more attention and read some of the works which different committees of the Senate have compiled over the years, we would probably be a lot better off in this country. Not all senators are party hacks.

The Bank Act has been strengthened because the Senate finance committee did excellent work in that area. There is a lot of brain power in the Senate. Members of the Senate pick up a lot of things we miss. They are not all sitting there gathering cobwebs. Many of them are men with high principles.

It is interesting to note that Senator Lafond and Senator McIlraith are sounded out as opposing the government's constitutional package. However, I want to quote from the Senate *Hansard* for February 24, 1981, when the Hon. Eric Cook spoke. He is a lifelong Liberal who can no longer stomach what is going on in this country. What he said was this:

I am opposed to the resolution because I am opposed to the federal government's unilateral action notwithstanding the disapproval of the majority of the provinces and the majority of Canadians.

Of course, we thank heaven we have about four NDP members here who have seen the light. The news media says they are men of principle. They are now going to vote against the government's package. I do not think it has anything to do with principle at all; they got a message from the electorate