

Tenure of Senators

eight or ten minutes left this afternoon. I commend the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) for bringing this bill forward. As has been said, there are perhaps not so many private members' bills on the Senate at the present time as there have been in past years, but I think this is still a very important subject. It was one of the 12 major subjects discussed all summer by federal and provincial representatives before the first ministers' conference last fall. It was in the same category as changes to the Supreme Court of Canada, resource ownership, offshore resources, equalization, a charter of rights and all the other of the 12 subjects which the provincial and federal people were trying to negotiate last summer and which were discussed at the first ministers' conference in September.

The Senate, or second chamber of some sort, is not just an anachronism that is just dying away slowly. I suggest it is right here and part of current political thought, and the question in the next few years will be what really can be done with the second chamber. The bill in the name of the hon. member for Vaudreuil gives us a chance—in a small way, perhaps—to discuss some of the aspects of this question.

I was interested in the comments of the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington). His comments were with respect to the problems of regionalism not just within the four regions of the country but also in the regions within the regions. In Ontario, from where I come, traditionally there have always been problems in northern Ontario. I see that the Minister of State for Mines (Mrs. Erola) is here. The people of northern Ontario consider theirs to be a region unto itself, and in many ways for very good reason. The people there feel that they are disadvantaged. We in southern Ontario, and particularly the Toronto area, hear about this all the time either in a political party sense, in a financial or economic sense or whatever.

The hon. member for Capilano mentioned the problems within his own province of British Columbia. The problems of the interior are different from those on the lower mainland. The people of the different parts of the Northwest Territories have a difficult time getting to know each other better because of great distances.

While a new second chamber may not be the only answer to the problem of regionalism, considering the way discussions are going and the way political thought in this country is going, it will be a significant factor in giving the regions better representation in the future.

While the regions are very important, while they certainly must get more representation and while they must also be seen to get more representation and a fair chance, we still have the other side of the coin, which is the one person, one vote principle. Some of us from central Canada perhaps have a difficult time with that. While acknowledging the problems of the regions, we still have difficulty giving away the one man, one vote principle. If three quarters of the people—or whatever the percentage is—live in central Canada, the question is

whether central Canada should have just half the votes rather than somewhat more or some other percentage. However, in spite of everything there is no question that with all the discussions going on in Canada in recent years, the regions in one way or another will be getting much more representation.

It is interesting to be back in the House with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). As hon. members know, I was here between 1968 and 1972. During those years I think at least once a year the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, for whom I have a great amount of respect, would get up on at least one occasion and give a speech somewhat similar to the one he gave this afternoon. He has been here in this House almost continuously since, I believe, 1942, and over those nearly 40 years he has made his points on this subject very clear. He has made good arguments.

Arguments on proportional representation and other things will be discussed in the future, but I think the argument of the hon. member for Vaudreuil regarding the fact that almost all federations have two chambers is quite a telling argument. The hon. member for Vaudreuil also mentioned the excellent work, which is acknowledged on all sides of the House, of members of the Senate in preparing reports of various kinds. There have been reports on poverty, retirement, science policy, a policy on the media and others, all of which are well known and acknowledged to be excellent.

As always happens, I am in the unfortunate position this afternoon of having two prepared speeches. One was prepared with the help of my excellent researcher, and one is from the Department of Justice. Two minutes really is not enough time in which to give either of them. However, in the years to come I think we will see that the subject of a second chamber will come up on more than one occasion. I hope it will come up not just in private members' hours such as this—which is a good chance to air some of these questions—but I presume we will also be discussing government proposed bills respecting new constitutional reforms in the future. Some of us will, in any event. We will talk about a second chamber because, despite the opinions of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and many members of his party—opinions which are shared by some in other parts of the House—as I mentioned before, I think the realization is coming to more and more of us, including those of us from central Canada, that a second chamber, whether it is the Senate or whatever it will be called in the future, can have a significant role to play in the future of our parliamentary life.

May I call it five o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. It being 5 p.m., this House stands adjourned until Monday next at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 2(1).

At 5 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.