

*British North America Act*

years that have worked hard on various subjects and have produced some good reports. It is a good idea for us to have people to whom we can assign the job of making surveys, carrying out studies and performing research, but we should do this by setting up commissions or committees to do specific jobs. There is no reason why the people to whom we assign these jobs should be at the same time fully paid on a year-round, lifetime or up to age 75 basis, who have the same legislative authority that we have, in the right to veto the things which are passed in this House of Commons.

There is a place for royal commissions, for research and for inquiries into specific subjects, but let us appoint experts to do that kind of job, and let their appointments be in respect of specific jobs. I do not think these people should at the same time, along with their right to investigate subjects, have the right to veto what we do in the House of Commons.

I know some members will ask why I keep referring to the use of the veto since the Senate does not use it very often. The number of times in history that the Senate has rejected something from this house can be counted on the fingers of one hand, but the power to do so is there and this is a power in excess of the power of the House of Lords in Great Britain, and it is a power in excess of the power of either house against the other in a set-up like that at Washington. The power is there and the Senate can use it year in and year out to veto a piece of legislation that we might pass.

Another argument which is advanced is that it is desirable in a country such as ours to have some means of bestowing honour upon people who have served during their day and rendered particular service to their country. I think there is a place for this, but the Senate is hardly used for that in any discriminating fashion.

**Mr. Churchill:** Such as services performed during an election campaign?

**Mr. Knowles:** That seems to be one of the services for which you receive the honour of being appointed to the Senate.

I believe our universities do a better job of honouring people when they bestow honorary degrees. There are other areas of our life where honours are much more appropriately given, so this is not a good argument for the retention of the Senate.

[Mr. Knowles.]

I have tried to discuss this question today, not in the context of some of the feelings which exist about the Senate. If I had brought down my file of letters, which I have received regarding the Senate, particularly in the last few weeks since certain appointments have been made, this would have produced interesting reading but a different kind of debate. I am asking members to look at this issue, not out of any feeling against any particular Senator over there, or any particular prime minister for the kind of appointments he has made, but in light of what is good for a political democracy and for representative government, which we believe we ought to have in this country.

There are those who suggest that the Senate should be reformed. That has been the cry since 1867. Every prime minister who has tried to reform it has failed, and the methods of reform we have had lately have hardly improved it. I think we should look squarely at it as something not to be reformed, but to be done away with entirely.

There are those who say we should elect our Senators. I suppose that would be better than having them appointed; but I submit that parliamentary government has got along just as well in Manitoba and Nova Scotia without the upper houses that those provinces had at the beginning of their histories. I submit that with all of the strains that we now have in Canada between the federal parliament and the provincial legislatures, between and among our various provinces, it would be just a little too much to have one more strain, namely a conflict between two elected houses which would have, in some sense, equal moral authority, which does not obtain at the present moment.

If the Senate were an elected body, I think it would be in the nature of a fifth wheel, adding nothing to our governmental or parliamentary machinery. For these reasons I believe that we should look seriously at the whole question of whether or not we should keep the other house. It is in this spirit that I have presented this bill today. I have tried not to indulge in personalities or in some of those things we say when we talk about the other place. I ask everyone to look at this bill in terms of what is good for representative parliamentary democracy.

In my opinion it would be better if all those who have a say in the laws which are passed in this country were themselves elected representatives, as they are in this House of Commons. For that reason I ask members