

respect to which it will exercise its constitutional veto, although it has the power to do this. I suggest that the tradition now established should be enshrined in an amendment to the constitution.

On point 2 Senator Croll said this:

Point 2 deals with the distribution of senators. Here again I accepted what the Constitution Committee said because I thought that was the right thing to do and I could not think of anything better.

The distribution of senators should be as follows:

Newfoundland 6, Prince Edward Island 4, Nova Scotia 10, New Brunswick 10, Quebec 24, Ontario 24, Manitoba 12, Saskatchewan 12, Alberta 12, British Columbia 12, Yukon Territory 2, and Northwest Territories 2.

It is true that the two central provinces, Ontario and Quebec, exercise too much influence in parliament. Today we face difficulties concerning western alienation. We do not hear enough about eastern alienation although that, too, has become a real problem. I think different areas of the country should make representations about the fair distribution of Senate seats.

● (1740)

Senator Croll continued:

3. The supporters of any one political party should not comprise more than two-thirds of the membership of the Senate at any one time and the Canadian constitution should be amended as soon as possible to ensure this result.

I agree. It is not a fair situation where you have, in the Senate, no members from the party that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre represents, only 17 members from the Conservative Party, and the balance from the Liberal Party.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There is one Social Creditor, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Blais: And one from the Social Credit. I do not agree that this is a good situation, Mr. Speaker. It is true that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has offered that for every Conservative member who wishes to retire now a new member could be appointed from the younger members of that party. That is a very good suggestion on an ad hoc basis, and I see here the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) who would make an ideal Senator. He has the stature.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) is a friend of mine and I do not like to hear him insulted.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. Half an hour ago he was saying how he respected the people in the other place and that his intention to abolish that institution had nothing to do with the type of people in it. Now he says I am insulting the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton. Between us, Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton is eminently pleased by my suggestion.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Convey it.

British North America Act

Mr. Blais: Now we come to the fourth point.

4. The compulsory retirement age of Senators, present and future, should be 70 years. Upon retirement, a Senator should retain the title—

And so on.

I do not agree with that particular reform. I agree with the Prime Minister's suggested reform of an appointment for seven years, or a limited number of years, with the right of reappointment.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): If they are good.

Mr. Blais: Of course. The appointments would have to be reviewed and it would be part of the political process. There would be a heavier onus on the government to remove or reappoint, dependent on the circumstances. As soon as the government changed you could pull out Grits and put in Tories. You could do that every seven years, though in some cases you might have to wait two or three years. Everybody would be pleased if we got that ratio of two-thirds and one-third. Going on to the next point, Mr. Speaker, it reads:

5. The Speaker, the government leader and the opposition leader should be elected by the members of this House; the government leader by the supporters of the government; the opposition leader by non-supporters of the government.

I also agree with that particular reform. It would give independence to the Senators to elect their own House leaders both in government and in opposition. There would be some sort of coherence and, speaking from experience, there is nothing more stimulating than competition for various posts within one's own party. I say that is a reform which should be accepted. Then we come to the next point:

6. The government leader and the opposition leader in the Senate should serve for only one parliament and should not be eligible for re-election subsequently.

Again, I agree. I do not think there is much dispute about that.

7. The age of the government leader and the opposition leader in the Senate, and the Speaker, should not be more than 65 years at the time of election to that position, so that at the end of the parliament for which he or she is elected, he or she will still be under 70 years of age.

I think that is a minor detail which could be ironed out without difficulty, once the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre agrees. Then we come to the next point:

8. The government leader in the Senate should not be a member of the cabinet.

Again there is a suggestion that there might be some backdoor influence on the deliberations of the Senate by having one member sit in cabinet. To continue:

9. The government should appoint a Senator as a minister without portfolio for the purpose of liaison with the government.

Indeed such representation in the cabinet might be one which would permit the Senator to act with a certain amount of independence both in the cabinet and afterwards in the Senate, so that the Senate operation would be determined by the leader of the government party in the Senate, and the opposition party would then be able to offer its opposition in the normal way without having a direct link to the exercise of authority in cabinet by