

Senate Reform

of the improvements that could be made in appointments, operation and so forth. I do not believe that they are lacking objectivity and could not look at this question fairly and come to a conclusion. I am quite sure they know where improvements can be made in the operation of the Senate. For that reason I think the hon. member's motion should have been to set up a joint committee and to take care of the House of Commons portion of it so that there would be a joint effort to look at the legislative processes of Parliament. We cannot separate them because at the moment and from time to time during the session there are bills which go from this House to the Senate. Sometimes they are amended, as one was today, and come back to this House for reconsideration.

Mr. McGrath: That was a good amendment today.

Mr. Aiken: As my friend from St. John's East says, it was a good amendment to the legislation. For this reason I think we should work together and look at the joint legislative process rather than using this motion to beat the other House once again for its shortcomings. We have a few ourselves. We often pass bills here after days or weeks of consideration and anguished debate and send them to the other place, expecting them to deal with the matter in an afternoon—and some of it is very important legislation. I think members of the Senate have cause for complaint about the way we treat them.

As has been pointed out, very effective work is being done in the other place both in originating legislation and in financial affairs. As generally happens, the hon. member from the New Democratic Party who introduced this motion took the opportunity to whack at the Senators for financial and business interests which might be inconsistent with their legislative capacity and for the fact that the Senate is sometimes considered a retirement house for old politicians. I do not think we can be too critical in these respects. I believe some benefit derives from the Senate. We must remember that the effective power in Parliament is in this House and not in the Senate, by reason of the presence of the cabinet within this House and the fact that we are an elected body. We cannot say that the power of legislation rests equally with the Senate and the House of Commons.

The fact that some Senators had or have business interests and connections is not a bad thing. Sometimes it is of benefit to have knowledge of what you are talking about. Many of the things that the other House considers effectively pertain to business, financial and economic matters. They make good amendments and have worthwhile discussions. As far as the question of retired politicians is concerned, a quick look at the membership of the Senate, particularly those who are doing good work, will show that most of them have some political background.

Of course, some improvements could be made to the Senate. The point was raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) that there should be a limit on the length of time the Senate can delay legislation. I agree with that; there should be no right in the other place to hold up legislation indefinitely. This is one of the weaknesses which should be corrected and in this case we have been delinquent.

There are many other things I should like to say, Mr. Speaker, but time is running out. I merely wish to express my reservations on the motion, first because there should be a joint committee of both Houses and, second, because I could not agree to the abolition of the Senate. For these reasons I cannot support the motion in its present form.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to talk out this motion but I want to make one comment. In my opinion it is a very immoral thing indeed to have a law-making body in a country that calls itself democratic if part of that law-making body is not subject to election and recall at the proper time by the electorate. That is all I want to say.

Mr. Murray McBride (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, it is a delight to have an opportunity to say at least a few words on the motion before us in the name of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Orlikow). It is my conviction that the Senate suffers from not reflecting very accurately what the electors might expect. We are all aware that bills may originate in either House and that they must pass both Houses and receive royal assent before they become law.

By means of the ballot box, the House of Commons, hopefully, does reflect the will and wish of the public. I think it might be accurate to say that we have "do it yourself" government in this country where no person or persons govern by any divine or preordained right or privilege. This means that we are here because the people of the country want us to be here and we function as the people want us to function. It therefore seems to me that the upper House, which is appointed, cannot really be justified today when we have a very highly-educated populace and people want to participate more fully in the decision-making process. I count myself amongst those who believe very strongly—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hour assigned for consideration of private members' business has expired. It being five o'clock, this House stands adjourned until eleven o'clock Monday morning, pursuant to special order of the House made earlier this week.

At five o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to special order.