

*Senate Role in Parliamentary System*

the Senate, and who may not be in agreement with all the criticisms I make of present or past Senators, will realize the important function, the important rights and the important veto powers the Senate of Canada has, and will therefore be willing to support this resolution which calls on the government to appoint a committee which would study the whole question of what role, if any, the Canadian Senate should fill.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy LeBlanc (Rimouski):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to express my views on this question.

I have listened very carefully to the remarks of the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), who has just resumed his seat.

I have noticed that the hon. member has talked mostly in favour of abolishing the Senate, instead of insisting on the chief merit of the motion he was proposing to us, namely, the desirability of recommending to the government that a special committee be established to study the reorganization of the Senate and, perhaps, its abolition.

● (5:20 p.m.)

The abolition of the Senate is only one important point among several raised in his motion.

The hon. member begins by saying that he will always be in favour of abolishing the Senate. It is obviously his right to hold this opinion but what astonishes me is that, as far as I know, those who advocate most strongly the abolition of the Senate, of that institution which seems useless, backward, obsolete, a relic of the past, as he said, are precisely his own colleagues.

I am not sure of it but, a few years ago, was not one of his colleagues appointed to the Senate?

I am wondering whether the reason which leads the hon. member to fight with such frenzy for the disintegration of this venerable institution would not be that he feels disappointed and desperate about the improbability of his appointment to the Senate.

All of us speak more and more about evolution, but it seems to me that we could go too far when speaking of the evolution of our democratic society. It may be that the hon. member has exaggerated in saying that the Senate is a frivolous, pre-democratic and medieval institution.

[Mr. Orlikow.]

There are still many institutions which we all find valuable and which date from the Middle Ages or from a still more remote period.

However, I commend the hon. member for having brought in that motion, because I personally feel that it would be desirable to reform the Senate. The term "unreformed Senate" struck me, because it is surely partly accurate.

When considering the reform of the Senate, we could envisage the possibility of a fairer representation of the various ethnic groups of the Canadian population. Bilingualism and biculturalism, for example, are realities in our country. Right-minded citizens from all groups are proud to say that Canada is a bicultural and bilingual country.

It was even proposed that senators be elected, a system which could well be applied in the future and which has its merits since some countries, the United States included, elect their senators.

That senators should be company directors or that they should have some money interests, as the hon. member said, there is nothing illegal in that. Besides, is it as dangerous as he claims? When a senator is appointed while he is well on in years, it is obvious that he has not been waiting all his life for this post and that he certainly had other activities in the past. That he should already hold important offices in business or industry seems normal to me.

If we want our senators to be practical occasionally and to know how to join theory to practice, it is necessary that we should give them a chance to be realistic.

Having practical duties to perform in society could help them prove more useful to their country, I believe.

As concerns financial questions, they must be discussed, since we are all interested in them, including the hon. member.

When income tax or other tax matters are debated, we are all concerned, for we all have to pay taxes.

One of our past prime ministers, and others before him, came under fire for having made some political appointments. The hon. member said a while ago that the former prime minister had named 5 of the 31 present senators; it was their reward as party supporters, for having rendered great services to the party now in office. It seems to me that the proportion is not that great and, furthermore, who would blame those men for having