

Retirement Age for Senators

would allow the Senators of today, if they so choose, to avail themselves of this retirement opportunity. I am not sure that I agree with the principle of the Bill. In fact I think it is rather ironic that some of the very best members of the Senate today are over the age limit contemplated by the Bill. I do not intend to mention names, but there are some outstanding people beyond the contemplated age limit.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, this Bill really is not a reform measure, and we are very disappointed with the Liberal Party, which for years has advocated a change in the Senate; because this minor change is all that is being presented at this time. Surely the Government should have come up with something more specific if what the Liberal Party has said about Senate reform is really what it meant.

If one looks at the speeches made during the debate on a private Member's bill presented last year by the hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre, and the speeches made during the resolution stage, he will see that neither the Liberal nor the Conservative Parties are really concerned about Senate reform. They are completely out of touch with Canadian public opinion on this subject. Last year when we were discussing the flag legislation many demands were made for a plebiscite. I am not one who believes in plebiscites, because Members of Parliament are elected to do a job, but I suggest that if we held one on the subject of the abolition of the Senate, a majority would be obtained.

Because of the fact that the Government has presented no reform bill the members of this party feel that this House should have the opportunity of clearly expressing itself on the subject of Senate reform. Our idea of Senate reform is abolition of that body. With that in mind I move at this time, seconded by the hon. Member for Winnipeg North:

That Bill C-98 be not now read a second time but that it be resolved that in the opinion of this House the Senate should be abolished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members like to submit their views as to the acceptability of this motion for the guidance of the Chair?

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Carleton): Mr. Speaker, on the point of order which is raised by this motion, by accepting this motion we would in effect be acting in a unilateral manner. I do not believe such a motion can be entertained within our constitutional practice.

Certainly our ability to entertain such a motion within our practice is questionable, particularly when there has been no reference to the Provinces and no reference to a federal-provincial conference. The motion says nothing in that regard, and I submit it goes beyond the scope of the constitutional authority of this House.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, with great respect to my friend the hon. Member for Carleton I disagree completely with the argument he has advanced. The amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Burnaby-Richmond does not finalize the abolition of the Senate; it simply calls upon this House to express the opinion that the Senate ought to be abolished.

If this House did express that opinion then, of course, an attempt would have to be made to go through the legal steps necessary to give effect thereto. May I remind you, Sir, that on several occasions amendments to motions to go into committee of supply, and to other measures, calling for the abolition of the Senate, have been moved and voted on in this House. I have to admit that they have all been turned down, but to my knowledge and within my memory the House of Commons has on several occasions voted on the question whether or not in the opinion of the House the Senate ought to be abolished.

• (12:20 p.m.)

Mr. Moreau: You are trying to destroy our British tradition.

Mr. Knowles: The hon. Member for York-Scarborough really floors me with the profundity of his remark. May I also draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to citation 382 in Beauchesne's fourth edition. This citation is in a group of paragraphs relating to what is appropriate at the second reading stage of a bill. Citation 382 reads as follows:

It is also competent to a Member who desires to place on record any special reasons for not agreeing to the second reading of a bill, to move as an amendment to the question, a resolution declaratory of some principle adverse to, or differing from, the principles, policy, or provisions of the bill—

That is the relevant part of citation 382, but just to put it all on the record perhaps I should finish reading it.

—or expressing opinions as to any circumstances connected with its introduction, or prosecution; or otherwise opposed to its progress; or seeking further information in relation to the bill by committees, commissioners, the production of papers or other evidence or the opinion of judges.