

Abolition of Senate

and correctly substantiate, and yet took it upon himself to take that one further step with respect to false accusations and innuendoes.

It surprises me that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre would refer to the fact that from time to time mistakes can be made. It was not the intention of the creators of this parliament to witness the type of errors and disrespect which has been expressed and shown by quite a few members opposite in recent days. I mention this only by virtue of the fact that the two previous speakers took it upon themselves to attempt to bring in some form of petty politics when we were discussing Bill C-203.

Mr. Dean Whiteway (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, because it is three minutes to six o'clock, because I appreciate even these three minutes to speak on the bill introduced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), and because my colleague has been here for more years than I am old, I hope I will be able to teach an old dog new tricks.

I have read the speeches of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre which he has presented in his Chamber before. He is singing the same old tune. I thought along the way he would have picked up something more concrete than simply to abolish the other place. I hope to hear that elder statesman say that perhaps the Senate ought not to be abolished but reformed to make it meaningful.

It is equally astounding that my hon. colleague, who is well known in the country as a defender of the democratic system, would suggest that we ought to abolish the Senate and only have an elected House of Commons based on representation by population. That would leave regions of this country, especially the smaller provinces, without any system of checks or balances and without any equalized power to the central provinces, namely, Ontario and Quebec. I find it absolutely astounding he did not somehow suggest that the Senate would be that kind of compromise.

I wanted to trace the constitutional convention of 1789 in Philadelphia in order to demonstrate the problems they had with the same kind of dilemma, how to balance the power in a federal system between the larger provinces and the smaller provinces. I was disappointed that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre did not suggest that the Senate should consist of equal representation from each province, comprised of nine Senators appointed by provincial legislatures for a six-year term on a rotating one-third basis, and three Senators each for the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, and that this Senate would indeed be—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time for private members' business has expired.

[Mr. Harquail.]

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE—POWERS OF McDONALD COMMISSION INVESTIGATING ALLEGED ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, as Your Honour is aware, and as the House is aware, it is not the normal practice of the Leader of the Opposition to take part in the adjournment debate; but I am doing so today because, in my view, there is a fundamental principle of the parliamentary system which is at stake here and which is being violated by the Government of Canada. The principle is that ministers of the government must take responsibility for the acts of civil servants under their general direction. That is well established in all the writing about the parliamentary system in this country and elsewhere.

● (1802)

I quote briefly from McGregor Dawson's basic textbook "The Government of Canada" where Professor Dawson says:

The Minister at the head of every department is responsible for everything that is done within that department.

From "Constitutional Law" by Wade and Phillips, as reproduced in H. V. Wiseman's book, "Parliament and the Executive", we find the following:

For what an unnamed official does or does not do, his Minister alone must answer in Parliament and the official, who cannot be heard in his own defence, is therefore protected from attack. The positive liability of a Minister is essential to the performance by Parliament and, more particularly, by the House of Commons of its role of critic of the Executive.

That authority goes on to make a fundamental point in this case, and that is that no minister can shield himself by blaming his official.

What we have seen far too frequently in the practices of this government is precisely the practice of blaming officials where the ministers themselves should take responsibility. We saw that in the case of Larry Stopforth, in the case of the executive assistant to the present Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer), and now in this case we are seeing it in the case of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The House and the country know that there were illegal acts, but what we have to determine is by whom were those illegal acts committed and at whose direction. Let me come to the question of "by whom". They were committed, so far as is known, by members of the security services, and here I make the distinction between members of the security service and members of the regular force of the RCMP.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: As the minister well knows—even though he has tried to keep this from the House—and as the House should