

Retirement Age for Senators

Mr. Regan: Most Canadians do not want socialism or funny money. So I suggest that anything that has been said on the subject of Senate reform by the members of these parties must be considered in conjunction with the foregoing facts.

I would say it is democratic to appoint men who have served this country well, and who have demonstrated across the years by their participation in one of the two major political parties of this country that they are in the mainstream of Canadian political life. I think it would not be democratic to appoint to the Senate people who are not representative of the general feelings of Canadians.

We have, for instance, the incongruous situation of the hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) being extremely critical of the fact that over the years under Conservative and Liberal Governments appointments have been made to the Senate of men who had served in political life, men who had served well in the House of Commons, the legislatures and elsewhere. Rather than appointing these people who have been recognized by the Canadian public by having been elected, the hon. Member for Winnipeg North had the audacity to suggest that a man like Eugene Forsey should be appointed to the Senate, a man who again and again and again has been a defeated candidate and never an elected member. What sort of democracy is that? What brand of democracy would call for the appointment, not the election, to the Senate of a man who has been spurned again and again by the people of the country?

Mr. Thompson: May I ask the hon. Member a question? How many Senators appointed by Liberal Governments have been previously defeated candidates in elections time and time again?

Mr. Regan: I suggest to the hon. Member that he would find the figure would be remarkably small.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Regan: If the hon. Member will bear with me for a few minutes I propose to show that the present system of appointment is extremely worth while by reviewing the qualifications and records over the years of the present 10 Senators, both Liberal and Conservative, who represent my home province in the Senate. If the hon. Member will just stick with me for a little while I will do that.

The present system has brought to the Senate men and women who have been build-

ers of this country, men and women who have played a part in the growth of economic activity in our nation. It has produced men like Senator Croll, a reformer, and surely no one will argue with that. It has produced men like Senator Roebuck. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that when I consider the ability of a man like Senator Roebuck, now well past his 80th birthday, this is the only time I hesitate with regard to the retirement legislation now before us.

Mr. Orlikow: Will the hon. Member permit a question?

Mr. Regan: I will deal with any other questions later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Cameron, High Park): The hon. Member for Halifax has the floor. If he is willing to accept a question he may do so; otherwise I would ask him to proceed.

Mr. Regan: I will be happy to deal with questions from anyone other than party leaders at the end of my speech, and try to answer questions from party leaders immediately. In saying that I am not taking into account the four or five divisions within the New Democratic Party.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that a careful examination of the contributions that have been made by the great majority of men and women who are now members of the Senate, as well as those who have been members in the past, will show that the Senate has been and indeed continues to be a very worth-while organization.

It has been mentioned that members of the Senate perform a useful and helpful function in committees. I suggest that their work in that regard could be expanded by their having a greater number of committees and spending a greater amount of time in such work with beneficial results. But surely it is important for the people of Canada to realize that, important as the committee and other activities of the Senate may be, the most important role of the Senate arises out of the fact that its members have the wisdom of years of experience in the mainstream of Canadian political life. This experience is available to provide a sober second thought if that should be necessary by reason of the House of Commons moving too quickly or too rashly at any time.

Mr. Peters: Give us one example.

Mr. Regan: I am going to give you 10 examples from the province of Nova Scotia—