

*British North America Act*

good hard look at the fact of our parliament's including a body which is not elected by the people of Canada.

I know in this country we tend to take the Senate for granted; it is part of our life. We have snow in the winter and taxes in the spring, and they have rain in Vancouver; these are just facts of Canadian life. So, the Senate is taken that way. However, I say, if we look at it in terms of political theory and in terms of common sense, in my view there just is not any place for a body that is part of parliament, which has all the powers we have, and yet is not responsible to the people of Canada. When a person is put in the Senate he may make mistakes, as members elected to this house may make mistakes; but if a member here makes a mistake he has to go back to his people in the next election.

On the other hand, if you make a mistake in the other place, you stay there—previously it was for life—until age 75. If you go there at age 35 or 40 you have a good many years in which to make mistakes, without any responsibility back to the people of this country. So it is on this basis, namely that common sense makes no provision for such an institution, that I think we should take steps to abolish it and provide for a parliament of Canada consisting, as the principal clause of my bill suggests of the Queen and the House of Commons.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Some members may ask how we are to achieve this objective if it is a worthy one, as I think it is. I recognize that problems are involved. To do this I think we have to achieve an amendment to the British North America Act, but I believe under section 91 (1) we do have the power in the Parliament of Canada to amend the B.N.A. Act in respect of matters that are federal.

I recognize that to get such a bill passed by parliament, as it is now constituted, would require the approval of this house and the approval of the other place as well. If we pass this bill between now and six o'clock I do not imagine the senators will, with any expedition, set out to approve of our action. This is going to take time, but it seems to me that the time can and will come when, the House of Commons in the name of the people having asked for the abolition of that body that is not elected, that other body will have to take a pretty good look at itself. It may turn us down the first time, but if the House of Commons has taken this stand and goes back to the people, making it one of the

issues of an election, and the people vote for the return of the government of the parliament that wants to abolish the Senate, then I think that moral and legal authority would prevail, and that the House of Commons would be able to take action along this line.

As a matter of fact, this has been made very easy for us by the government on the other side of the house as the result of the attitude taken toward Mr. Lesage's request regarding the upper house in Quebec, although I understand that matter is still in the works. However, I am freely admitting that there is a legal and constitutional problem, while at the same time I am suggesting that this can be done and that common sense calls for us to face up to this problem and do something about it at an early date.

May I now just briefly—because I do want to leave time for others to support this bill—deal with two or three of the arguments that are advanced in favour of our having a Senate. There are those who say we need it so it can give sober second thought to the things that are done in the House of Commons, so that it can review our legislation and check hastily passed or ill-conceived measures. In all frankness, Mr. Speaker, I must ask this question: Why should another body of non-elected people, responsible to no one, have the right to throw out things that we pass in this House of Commons? If we make mistakes, the people to whom we are answerable are not 102 individuals who are not responsible to anybody, but rather to the electors at the next election.

I think this whole idea of a body of non-elected elder statesmen—they are not all elder statesmen now; some are a bit younger, but they are still in the same category of non-elected people—having the right to throw out what we have done in this house is politically and morally wrong.

Another argument advanced in favour of the other place is that it is needed to protect minorities. I do not know what minorities have been protected by the other place, provincial, ethnic or otherwise. I suggest that the place where minorities in this country get their best protection is in the courts or right here in the House of Commons, where you have people who, as I say, have to go back to those same minorities and win their seats at the next election.

Another argument advanced for the retention of the Senate is that it sets up committees that do good work. I quite agree that it has set up a number of committees in recent