

*Human Rights*

out if we have made a mistake or not is sad, because this institute could do a lot to help people understand our kind of democracy.

● (1640)

Everyone is unkind to the Senate. I would like to say a word on the constitutional right of the Senate, if it is only to make the Hon. Minister a little more impatient. The virtue of politics is patience. I know the Minister wants the Bill passed and wants to have Royal Assent, but for me, each minute counts. Perhaps there will be an election, I do not know. For now, there is a duty to be done.

I will tell Hon. Members why the bell rang a minute ago. For something as important as we are doing, we need a quorum. I was not playing games. We need a quorum, according to the British North America Act of 1867, Article 48. Some believe that Mr. Speaker is the only one who could go to the Senate to represent us all, but that is not true. That has been slowly implemented, but according to my understanding of the British parliamentary system, particularly the way we have implemented it here in Canada, we should have 20 Members, and the Speaker shall be reckoned as a Member.

At times, by agreement, we can do anything. By agreement, we do not see the clock. By agreement, we can say that it is Monday. However, if a Member insists, it is too bad, and I am one of those who insisted.

I regret that neither of the Ministers could come to the House to explain exactly what they have accepted that originated in the Senate committee that studied the Bill extensively and heard from great experts. I say this for the benefit of those who are listening and those did not have a chance to come forward to put their views. I would hope that they will listen to us. They should read the speech made by Senator Ottenheimer from Waterford—Trinity. He made an excellent speech that everyone should read. The Hon. Allan MacEachen made an excellent speech that everyone should read to understand the meaning, the feeling and the work of Senators. They have the constitutional right to do this.

If we do not like the Senate, let us abolish it. But as long as the Senate exists, the Senate has the constitutional right to do certain things. I am in favour of at least amending the Senate Act, and that would please the Minister, so that the Senate could not delay any longer than three to six months any legislation. I am in favour of a system like that of Great Britain with no suspensive veto longer than three or six months.

The Right Hon. former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau did this in matters pertaining to the Constitution. It is because of Mr. Trudeau that we have today the Meech Lake Accord. He insisted, in the repatriation of the Constitution, that in the case of amendments pertaining to the Constitution, the Senate could not delay for more than six months. It is good for people to know this, though it only refers to matters pertaining to the Constitution. That is why we have Meech

Lake today. So, *en passant, un coup de chapeau*, and I do not know how to translate that.

Perhaps I will give the Minister a gift by sitting down. If he has more explanations for the object of the Bill, I will receive them with pleasure.

I for one believe that as long as the Senate exists, it has the constitutional right to do what it has done. If you do not like the Senate, abolish it. After all, when the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) was the Minister of Justice, he wanted to amend the Senate Act, and he should have done so. He would not have had the trouble he has had today. I would vote for a suspensive veto of from three to six months any time.

The Senate has looked into the Bill, and has been highly accommodating to the Government. It passed the Bill rather rapidly. It could have taken a few more months and could have called the witnesses we forgot to call in the Lower House.

I regret, on behalf of the Commoners that we are, that we could not hear from all the people who would have liked to have attended to put forward their views on this very important piece of legislation. If it is better now, it is because the Senate majority saw fit to amend the Bill to make it more acceptable. It amended Clause 28 of the Bill and the objective of the Bill in Clause 4.

Unprepared as I may have been for this, because I was expecting to be in my riding at three o'clock, I heard that the bells were ringing. I did not know what was going on. I had to rush to the Senate and I discovered that it is because of this issue.

You can relax, Mr. Minister. I have finished. I do not know if others want to participate, but I have said enough.

I regret that we rushed the Bill. I regret that the Ministers were not here to explain the new object of the Bill. If the Minister is impatient, I would ask him to explain to me the object of the Bill. I would be interested in listening to him.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague if he would tell us where he stands on the Senate. Does he want it to be abolished or elected, or was he preaching for a call?

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Mr. Speaker, if that is the kind of comment I have to deal with at the end of a session, I can do without it, but I will answer. I do not expect a call. The Hon. Member will never get one because he said he is against the Senate. I would love to be there if he were ever offered a chair in the other Chamber and see how he would agonize and if he would accept or not.

Where do I stand on the Senate? It is very simple. If we cannot let the Senate do its own work, abolish it. If we cannot abolish the Senate, amend the Senate Act.

Does the Hon. Member want to hear a speech on the Senate? I will make one. I sat on the Constitution committee. I sat on the special committee in 1972 which went all across Canada. We made very special recommendations including