

*Retirement Age for Senators*

Edmonton West, which are reported at pages 417 and 418 of *Hansard* for April 26. The hon. Member said:

Mr. Chairman, in opening my brief remarks this afternoon I have found that there have been some rather wide-sweeping condemnations of the other place, and I am just wondering whether those remarks would have been quite as sincere if some representatives of the parties in question had themselves been members of the other place. I think that some of the criticisms made of the other place are quite equivocal, and it is because there are particular hobby-horses or axes to grind that we hear such sweeping condemnations.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona had this to say, as reported at page 422 of *Hansard* for April 26:

I think they honestly believe that any legislative body in this country upon which their Party is not represented must lack virtues which most of us feel are most important, if not essential, in any legislature.

There is implied or suggested there that if we had members in the Senate we would not make these criticisms; that if we had the opportunity to have members in the Senate we would not offer such criticisms.

In this regard I would remind hon. Members that in the past Mr. M. J. Coldwell was given an opportunity to become a member of the Senate. I remember that the Prime Minister in a television interview earlier this year mentioned the fact that Mr. Coldwell had had the opportunity for a Senate appointment at one time. I also believe that Mr. Claude Jodoin was offered a Senate appointment a number of years ago.

This perhaps does not prove the case, but I suggest that this matter can be put to the test again. My colleague the hon. Member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge) has announced that he will shortly retire from this House after 20 years' service. I suggest to the Prime Minister that perhaps he should offer him a place in the Senate. I say that because I am certain the hon. Member would refuse. If the Prime Minister wants a further test, he could in fact go down the line and offer each member of this party an appointment to the Senate and we would each refuse.

● (12:10 p.m.)

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Prittie:** I suggest that the Prime Minister could put it to the test if these arrangements were made.

Some of the discussion during this debate has revolved around personalities and the type of individuals appointed to the Senate. I recall on the last day of the hearings of the joint Parliamentary Committee on the Canada

[Mr. Prittie.]

Pension Plan one Member of the Government party saying something to the effect that he came to Ottawa with certain ideas about the Senate, but after watching the work performed by some of them at the joint Parliamentary Committee hearings he had changed his mind. I agree with the hon. Member that there were some very useful contributions made to that Committee by members of the Senate. I am also aware of the fact that there are some very valuable and intelligent Senators who have done some excellent work particularly in Committees, but I suggest this kind of discussion is quite beside the point.

I suppose that Senators are similar to Members of the House of Commons in that they vary in ability and in diligence in respect of attending the House and committees. That is also beside the point. Even if the Senate was composed of the very best people in the country, without exception, I still believe that the Senate stands condemned in the Canada of 1965. Our attention should be focused on the fact that in this age in Canada we have a body which has powers almost equal to the powers of the House of Commons, except for the right to introduce money bills; yet this body is not elected and not responsible to the electorate in any way.

I doubt very much if an upper chamber is necessary for the proper governing of this country. We seem to get along very well in nine of the ten Provinces without one. In the tenth Province the powers held by the upper chamber are now in question, and the Government of that Province is moving to reduce those powers considerably. Our sister dominion, New Zealand, abolished the upper chamber a number of years ago. Where upper chambers do exist they are either elected, as in the United States and in Australia or, as in the case of the United Kingdom, the chambers have very little power. I think before very many years the powers of the House of Lords will be further reduced, and I suggest that before the end of this century that chamber will be abolished.

I have very grave doubts as to whether in this day and age we need an upper chamber at all. If there is to be one, surely it ought to be responsible to the electorate in some way, as in the case of Australia. In Canada we have the worst of all possible situations, with a body which is powerful, so far as the constitution is concerned, but which is not responsible to the people in any way at all.

The Bill before us is not a reform bill, but one which merely makes provision for future retirement of Senators, with a clause which