

has made some valid observations about some of the abuses that have taken place, but the answer should not necessarily be abolition of that institution.

Let us make sure our conflict of interest rules in parliament are brought forward, applied, promulgated and enforced. We cannot have the senators operating by some unwritten rules unless we in parliament ourselves set down precisely what we want as far as conflict of interest rules are concerned. I have in mind the potential conflict of interest which could exist on the part of a member of the Senate who was a principal adviser to the Liberal party or the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), and was involved in any sort of business transaction with the Government of Canada. I see that as a potential conflict of interest. That senator, or a prime minister, might shrug it off by suggesting they are good guys and would never do anything wrong or give any appearance of preferential treatment or things of that sort.

The fact of the matter is that when people become involved in the Parliament of Canada they should be subject to rules that all of us understand, specifically those which involve the possibility of a conflict of interest, so that not only is justice done but it will appear to be done. In this way there would be no perception on the part of the average person in the country that some special attention is being paid to a proposal by virtue of the fact that a senator was acting as an agent in communicating with the government.

What I am saying is that there are many reasons for criticizing the Senate, but I would prefer to change some of the constitutional aspects, making the Senate a more responsible body, utilizing it in many ways of value to the country including to assist in providing a solution to the unity question with which we are faced today.

For those reasons, and not because I am without sympathy for some of the points raised by the hon. member, I cannot support his position in suggesting the abolition of the Senate.

● (1752)

**Mr. Maurice Harquail (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, from time to time one wonders how constructive members are in their approach to the private members' hour.

I want to take the opportunity to compliment the sponsor of Bill C-203 which is before us this afternoon. I have gained even a greater respect for this man than I had before arriving in this Chamber. Without being too facetious, I was wondering to whom he was referring when he attempted the humorous remarks about the House of Wax and people who appear to be of a certain vintage. We have heard it said many times that probably he should accept an invitation to go to the other place.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I thought you had some respect for him.

**Mr. Harquail:** He has mentioned that he has attempted this motion many times over the last 10 or 15 years. He has

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boasted the fact that he has outlived most of the members of the Senate, save three or four.

Some years ago the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) stated "I think this whole idea of a body of non-elected elder statesmen . . .". Certainly I would not think the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre would have anything against elder statesmen, because I place him in that category. I place him there with more than due respect. It has to be said that all hon. members in this Chamber have expressed the great respect which we have for the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harquail:** Therefore I do not have much to say about what he said this afternoon, but I would like to comment upon what he failed to say. He did not refer to the position of the government as it was stated in the previous Speech from the Throne, where the government's position was made very clear, that in part there is some agreement with the hon. member's sentiments in regard to the existing Senate structure. He did not talk about the desire of today's government with respect to reform of the Senate. Indeed, the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has made his position very clear on more than one occasion, both inside and outside the House, with respect to his desire to see reform in the Senate.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre did not take the opportunity this afternoon to make the position of his party clear with regard to the whole discussion on bringing back the constitution to Canada, or the repatriation of the constitution, which would enable us to proceed with the much talked about and desired reform. This would be one area which would permit us to act in that direction, which the hon. member has indicated he would like to see done. I do not agree with his over-all request for the abolition of the Senate.

Some of the excellent work carried out by the Senate has been referred to this afternoon, such as the excellent work by Senator Croll in the poverty committee; Senator Hastings in the penitentiaries studies; Senator Michaud in the agricultural studies, as well as Senator McElman in the communications inquiry. All the reports and committee work which have been undertaken by the Senate must be highly commended.

In so far as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is concerned, he is well aware of the present structure of the Senate. It is a creation of the British North America Act, and as such plays a role in the making of laws. It acts as a protection for the provinces in terms of legislation which flows from this parliament to the other place.

I would have thought the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre would have stuck to the subject of the bill. He mentioned that from time to time some mistakes are made in this House. I would have to agree with him in this regard: we have seen mistakes made in the last week or so by the Conservative party and the New Democratic Party with respect to the innuendoes and accusations which have been made. He did not talk about the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt) bringing in a document which he did not bother to verify