

Some members may stress the usefulness of Senate investigating committees, and refer to a series of reports some of which were mentioned by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Those are highly interesting papers stemming from investigations.

That, however, is no sufficient reason for keeping an institution, if it has served its purpose. A series of ways could be devised whereby such investigations could be completed.

But let us go back to sources for a moment. The Special Joint Committee of the Senate and of the House of Commons on the Constitution of Canada, known as the Molgat-MacGuigan Commission, threw light upon this matter in its final report of 1972. I quote an extract from page 33 of the report:

The Confederation Debates of 1865 prove that there would have been no Confederation in 1867, or at least no Canada as we know it today, if provision had not been made for the Senate. The Maritimes and Quebec were not prepared to join the union if there was to be only one elected House, based on population. Canada would be a federation, and not a unitary state. Consequently, if the Lower House were based on representation by population, there must be an Upper House giving equality to the regions.

Mr. Speaker, who could maintain that such a context remains relevant? The inhabitants of a province have their federal representative in this House and the position of provincial governments has gained so much strength over the years that it would be ridiculous to pretend that the population of a region relies upon its senators for its protection rather than upon its provincial government or its federal representatives.

The Committee on Constitution came to the conclusion, however, that it is necessary to reform the Senate rather than to abolish it.

● (1720)

[English]

I fully agree, to quote Lord Morrison of Lambeth, that if the choice is end them or mend them, we ought to end them. If we look to the mother of parliaments in Westminster, we see that the powers of the House of Lords have been severely curtailed.

I do not need to be reminded by members of the Senate of the other useful work they may do. I, too, have read the Canadian literature on the subject and have had the pleasure of seeing the Senate in operation. It seems clear there ought to be clearly established limits on their powers at the very least. On the whole, however, I believe the Senate ought to disappear for either it is a chamber, to paraphrase some of the wording of Sir John A. Macdonald in confederation debates, for registering the decrees of the Commons and therefore of no value, or an independent House having free action of its own, opposing, amending or postponing legislation and therefore, in my mind, an antithesis of democratic rule.

I like to think that some evolution has taken place since 1867. While the Senate as an institution may have been essential to our nationhood, this position can no longer be sustained in argument. The people of Canada are represented here by their elected members of parliament. The electoral process itself has been the object of improvements, particularly in the twenty-ninth parliament when

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a far reaching election expenses bill was passed. This will enable Canadians from all walks of life to run for parliament without incurring a crushing financial burden. Nor should the Senate be considered a secure haven for retired politicians.

Members of parliament who have served this country well should be adequately compensated during their tenure and should be entitled, on an equal footing for all, not to the advantage of the ruling party through Senate appointments, to adequate pensions. As for other distinguished Canadians, there are other ways of recognizing their contribution to the development and well-being of our country.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say that the role of the Senate as a political institution of this country ought to be decided upon in the only manner fully consistent with the existence of parliamentary democracy.

**Mr. J.-J. Blais (Nipissing):** At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate you upon your elevation. I am pleased to see that this year the Chair has been staffed with members from the region I am pleased to represent, namely, northern Ontario. The Speaker, who is from Sudbury, will equip himself for his responsibilities with new confidence, justice and good humour. I am sure that all officers of the Chair will equip themselves for their responsibilities in like manner.

I first spoke on this particular bill, which has not changed in any particular, on the occasion of my second speech in this House. At that time I indicated I did not want to make a practice of speaking on this particular piece of legislation. However, at the beginning of the second session I found myself responding to the presentation of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I succumbed to the establishment of a tradition, and here I am again. I will try not to be repetitious in the points I advance, because I feel this is a very serious issue.

I have noted with a great deal of respect the contributions that have been made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre on this particular topic. However, I feel his main point has been—and everything seems to fall on this particular argument—that the Senate ought to be abolished because it is not an elected body. Once he states that fact and presents that argument, nothing else is of any real import; nothing else is of consequence, because the only aspect of the Senate that he finds regrettable is one that could be cured by amendment.

The thrust of this bill is the abolition, and the main reason for abolition is that the Senate is not an elected body. I responded to that argument the last time. I stated that our traditions in this particular constitutional establishment, namely, parliament, have been to have responsibility bestowed upon individuals not as elected members but as appointed members. One need only look at the Crown, the Governor General and the Lieutenant-Governors of the various provinces. They participate in the governing of this country. They are not elected, but appointed. That has been the time-honoured tradition.

As I stated in my two previous speeches on this topic, I fully agree that the Senate ought to be reformed. I feel very strongly that that institution does not now function