

Senate and House of Commons Act

respect to the hon. member I say that I do not think his bill would work. I do not think it would be practical.

I see my good friend, the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), wants to get to his feet. He is one of those semi-independents, and I am not being critical of him. He is sort of an independent yet not quite independent. I have seen people like that in this House. They are in and out of their parties like yo-yo's. I do not think hon. members should operate that way; however, I think they should be allowed to differ with their parties.

I have sympathy for any hon. member who is a member of the government party but not a member of the cabinet. These hon. members may not agree with a bill the government brings in, just as I disagreed with some bills which were brought in when my party formed the government. These matters have to be fought out in caucus. It is not easy if you are aggressive, ambitious, intelligent and independent, but if an hon. member possesses those qualities the best place to argue these matters out is in caucus. The press does not know about disagreements like that, and therefore our constituents do not know. Our constituents may write asking where we were, even though we might have put on quite a fight against our leaders or against certain cabinet ministers. I have gone through all that. I know what it is like and I see hon. members opposite nodding their heads.

Hon. members on the government side who are not cabinet ministers are referred to as backbenchers. I have never really felt that that term had any merit. I think we are all basically equal. Some people get the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands may create a bishop, but it does not always make one. However, this is the system under which we work.

I want to leave with the House one final thought. I am proud to be a Conservative. I do not know how other parties operate, but I would not want this party not to have a broad philosophical approach. People say that our party has in it people to the left and people to the right. I do not know what a rightwinger or a leftwinger is. If it means that I am a little more liberal with a small "l" on certain issues than some of my friends, I may be in the middle of the road. If I am a little more conservative with a small "c" on some issues, I may be just right of the middle of the road. If that is what it means, I suppose we do have people in our party who are to the right or to the left, but I am happy that this party does have people in it who have different philosophies. That means we can take a broad approach to the problems of this country because we have different personalities, philosophies, and backgrounds. That is what puts a party together. Without that, parties will not last very long as parties, and they will not do very much for their country.

I see my good friend, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), here beside me this afternoon. On many occasions when the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) was the leader of his party and premier of Saskatchewan, my father supported his party.

An hon. Member: Oh!

[Mr. Woolliams.]

Mr. Woolliams: Somebody said "Oh". I will tell the House why my father did that. There were many things my father stood for which the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands also stood for. However, above all we had the Gardiner machine, and people became tired of it and wanted to throw it out. Many Conservatives voted for the hon. member. His party tried to nationalize a few things, and I certainly disagreed with that, but as an administrator, on the whole the hon. member was pretty good. He was a very fine premier because he was a man of integrity. I wish he was in the House this afternoon. People could disagree with him, but he never held that against them. The art of leadership and statesmanship is having that ability, and it is necessary whether we are premiers, leaders, cabinet ministers, or members of parliament.

The hon. member for Moncton is a distinguished member, and he has made a contribution to the House. No one can help but admire him for taking the stand he took. Some of us may not agree with him, but he took a stand, and that is his right. Mr. Woodsworth once said he had two sons. I hope I am telling this story correctly. One son was a conscientious objector during the war, and the other one was overseas in the RAF. Mr. Woodsworth said that they were both brave men, but sometimes it takes greater integrity and bravery to stand up against society or your own party for what you think is right. In this way I congratulate the hon. member for Moncton for taking the position he took. I did not agree with his position, but that does not mean I do not respect him. He stood up against great odds, against many people, and against his own party. That is why I would like to see him accommodated in some way, and I think this could be worked out in the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization.

I am glad the hon. member brought this matter before the House. Private members' bills allow hon. members to present grievances and have them aired in the House of Commons. I congratulate the hon. member for this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) I must allow the hon. member for Roberval (Mr. Gauthier) to speak because he seconded the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to explain why I seconded the motion. I am told that I am probably also an Independent but I sincerely supported this bill because I thought it was against the rules of the House. I know that if we concern ourselves strictly with the process involved, the bill now before the House is completely useless. But if we go further and if we consider the precedents of previous years, our judgment can be different because we have seen before Independent members sitting on committees. I do not know if, in those cases, there was an agreement with any party, but at any rate Independent members were allowed to sit on committees.

This year we have only one Independent member and several of his predecessors had this privilege, since I consider it a privilege for an Independent member to sit on a committee.