

Retirement Age for Senators

experience. If people under 50 have more advanced ideas, more dynamic or even more revolutionary ideas, it is in this house, in this House of Commons, that they will have a right to put them forward if they are elected by their constituents. Later on, if they are appointed to the Senate, they will be more enlightened men, more matured and experienced, who will be able to play their part as moderators and see to it that certain pieces of legislation advocated by a group of young and inexperienced persons be amended to take into account past experiences and provide for a sound balance in the future.

There is another point I should like to make. I think that senators should not hold any office as directors in Canadian companies, corporations, etc. While those people may be very honest they are sometimes caught in a conflict of interests. I think that a person who is appointed as senator should relinquish immediately any other office in any company or corporation so that he cannot be in the situation of having to choose between the interests of the country and those of a small group in which he may have personal interests. I think there is complete incompatibility between the position of senator and that of a director of a company, and I hope that the government, when other reforms are considered—or maybe it could be included in this bill—will make more progressive and positive amendments which will really give the Senate a better sense of responsibility and will improve the image of the Senate in the minds of the people. I am sure that if we made those few amendments we would give senators a real sense of responsibility, we would give them confidence in themselves and they would regain the respect of the people.

Mr. Gérard Perron (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, my few remarks with respect to Bill No. C-98 will be partly along the line of the remarks of my colleague from Lake St. John (Mr. Lessard).

May I refer to this part which deals with the appointment of senators or persons of the other house which, since confederation, certainly went through fairly drastic changes. Section 14 of the Address to Her Gracious Majesty, following the debate on the constitution, said this:

The first selection of the members of the legislative council shall be made, except as regards Prince Edward Island, from the legislative councils of the various provinces, so far as a sufficient number be found qualified and willing to serve. Such members shall be appointed by the Crown at the recommendation of the general executive gov-

ernment, upon the nomination of the respective local governments; and in such nominations due regard shall be had to the claims of the members of the legislative council of the opposition in each province, so that all political parties may as nearly as possible be fairly represented.

Such were the meaning and the spirit of section 14 of the Address which was a prelude to the Canadian constitution and to the appointment of the legal authority in Canada, composed of a governor general, a Senate or a federal legislative council and the House of Commons.

My colleague from Lake St. John precisely mentioned a while ago that it had become for many years a kind of political reward, I would even say, the Hall of Fame in politics.

However, those who are named in the Halls of Fame in the field of sport and who see their name inscribed on a plaque, have distinguished themselves by athletic feats during their career, contrary to what happens in the other place. As a matter of fact, appointments to the Senate should not be made principally as a reward to those who have held a political office for some years, or for services rendered to such and such a political party.

Such appointments should be based on the competence, knowledge and the services that those persons might have to offer to society, either through their knowledge of the law or of the economic and political situation throughout the country.

Section 14 which provided that such appointments take into consideration the opposition group in the various parliaments would indeed have allowed governments having been in office for 25 or 30 years in some provincial legislatures, to appoint to the other place competent persons holding political views on the economic and political future that would have made them more useful, no doubt, to the Canadian nation than the recent appointees.

Bill No. C-98 advocates voluntary retirement at 65 years of age and compulsory retirement on pension at 75 years of age, since it provides a specific amendment to the Senate and House of Commons Act for payment of a pension to these people on retirement at 75 years of age, and I wonder whether this is not another means for the two main political parties to create vacancies, inasmuch as some people having reached the age of 65 or 75 years and now sitting in the other place are no longer as active and no longer as able to render as much service, from the political point of view, as they were at the time of their appointment.