

Senate Representation

1978 or 1979 will we get a second member from the Northwest Territories sitting in this elected House. I suspect that the two northerners who are to sit in the Senate will take their places in the Senate chamber in a few months. For all I know they may already be in Ottawa, waiting for the invitation to take their seats in the other place.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): The list is long.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I hear my hon. friend from Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) commenting that the list is long. This morning my colleague from the Northwest Territories said that no self-respecting northerner would accept the appointment, and the jest came from all parts of the House to the effect that there is a long waiting list. I suggest that such comments only show very clearly the ridiculous nature of this proposal. It has nothing to do with the good governing of Canada or the rounding out of the parliamentary system. It has nothing to do with providing a greater say for the people of the north. This is just a provision to give two more Liberal appointees a spot in that other place.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): They might even offer you a spot, Stanley.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend says they might even offer me a place. Well, that just proves we are having good fun on Friday afternoon.

Mr. Neil: Would you turn it down?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend knows that I have repeatedly said I would not accept an appointment to that other place.

Mr. Stanfield: How about an appointment to the bench, Stanley?

An hon. Member: The gate should never be closed.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It has been suggested that the gate should never be closed. That reminds me of a conversation I had some time ago—let us not put a time limit on this—with three friends of mine in the other place.

An hon. Member: So you have friends there?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I thought that remark would produce that retort. Yes, I have friends over there. I became involved in a conversation, some time ago, with three of my friends in the other place who were trying to persuade me that I should go over there. I said it was a nice place to visit but I certainly would not want to go over there to stay. At any rate I argued with them in every way I could. I said, "You know what I think of the Senate and you know what I have said about it in the House of Commons. You know I keep introducing a bill to abolish the Senate. Why do you want me over there?" They said they had quite a few people over there who had been opposed to the Senate before being appointed to it, and that they had become good Senators. I said that would not apply in my case. At any rate, I tried all my good arguments to show why I would not consider a Senate appointment, and got nowhere.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Finally I said to those three friends, all of whom were in the Senate before there was an age limit—in other words, they were appointed for life—I said, "Look, I am now 66 years old, almost 67. If I go to the Senate I can stay only eight years or so; but in the House of Commons I can stay as long as I can get elected." They could not answer that. They liked the idea of their appointment being permanent, for life.

Let there be no question about it. I join the self-respecting northerners mentioned by my hon. friend from the Northwest Territories. I would not consider such an appointment in any circumstances.

What has the Senate done lately? What do Their Honours have to their credit, this year? They amended a bill of ours a few weeks ago. This House passed a bill which, among other things, provided that officers and directors of a corporation under certain circumstances could be held personally responsible for the wrongdoings of their companies. When the bill arrived at the other place, they—there are quite a few directors sitting over there—amended it, striking out the words "officers or directors" in all places in that bill where this House had inserted them. I was concerned when this House so supinely accepted the amendments. But that was the Senate's main contribution to the legislative program this session. It protected the position of officers and directors of corporations.

Of course the main activity over there was well documented the other day in a column in one of our daily newspapers which pointed out that the Senate is really the right arm of the Liberal party. After all, most of the people who are at the top level and run that organization must have some base from which to operate, must have some guarantee of their daily bread and butter; so they sit in the Senate and run the Liberal party from that place. All we shall do, if we pass this bill, is provide for two more persons to be part of the right arm of the Liberal party.

When my hon. friend from Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) spoke a while ago he said the Senate consisted of 85 per cent Liberal appointees and of 15 per cent Progressive Conservative appointees, and a handful of independents. Of course even those so-called independents are part of the first group. They may contend they are independents, but they are Liberal appointees. That is all we shall get from this bill—just two more Liberal appointees. And we shall get them right away.

Mr. Paproski: They are saving a spot for you, Stanley.

● (1430)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Was the hon. member not here a few minutes ago, or do I have to go over all that again? Certainly those of us who are practically always here on Friday afternoons have fun. There is no reason why a place as serious as this should not get light once in a while and indulge in a bit of jest. However, I submit that the humour being expressed respecting this bill really shows that, for all of the attempts that have been made to make serious speeches, we do not have respect for the non-elected other chamber in this parliament.