

As we have seen with the constitutional struggle in Australia in the last two years, there are many problems which result from this kind of arrangement, and I do not think we would want to make such a fundamental change in our system. With responsible government and the government being responsible to the lower House, it is appropriate that only that House should be elected, and that that House should make the basic determination of policy.

There are a number of areas in which I think we might reach some agreement across the Chamber as to what changes might be made to the Senate. The hon. member for Winnipeg North mentioned the power of the Senate. The constitution committee recommended that the Senate should have no more than a suspensive veto, that it be able to give a kind of six-month hoist to bills, but that if the House of Commons chose to pass a bill again after six months, it would then become law with or without the consent of the Senate.

There would probably be general agreement in this House on that kind of proposal. In fact many members would probably feel that a period of six months is too long and that the longest hoist the Senate should be able to give a bill is three months. Therefore the suspensive veto would be three months rather than six. That may be a matter of detail, but I think there would be very general agreement here that a change of that kind should be made.

There have been proposals for changes in the selection of Senators. The present selection, as we know, is by appointment of the government in Ottawa. There have been proposals that half of the Senators should be appointed by the provincial governments.

The constitution committee adopted a medium solution. While the provinces would not appoint Senators, and Senators would continue to be appointed by the federal government, half would be appointed from a panel drawn up by the provincial governments. They would be drawn from the group of nominations made by the provincial governments, but the actual power of appointment would remain with the federal government. Undoubtedly there are a number of members who would like to move in that direction.

There might be general agreement as well that 70 be the final retirement age rather than 75. Some feel that would be a good point at which to express our gratitude to the Senators for their active service and to allow them to serve in a different way. The constitution committee suggested that different way might be one which would allow Senators to continue to serve without pay and without official voting status. They would, in a general way, still be considered advisers to parliament, have the right to appear on Senate committees, and take part in the hearings so as to make contributions. Therefore a method might be found to enable Senators to make a contribution after their mandatory retirement age had been reached.

One of the crucial questions as to the actual provisions concerning retirement would have to do with whether or not there should be a term appointment. At the present time Senators are appointed until age 75. I have suggested that could be until age 70. However, even that would probably not go as far as many members of this House would wish to go.

Senate Reform

It has been proposed that Senators should be appointed for a five-year, seven-year or ten-year term. My own feeling is that Senate appointments should be on a term basis, but that the term should be slightly longer rather than slightly shorter. I would favour a ten year, rather than a five year or seven year term.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Certainly not a 40 year term.

Mr. MacGuigan: No, not a 40 year term. I prefer a longer term because it would be difficult to get people to accept a position in the Senate if the Senate had even less legislative power than it now has, and appointments were only for a five year period. People would not want to disrupt their other career at its height—and we would want people to come in at the height of their powers—for only a five year period. That might not be worthwhile for those being appointed.

I suggest we would be more likely to have a wide choice of appointees if we had a seven or even ten year term as an inducement. That might also be beneficial because, every five or ten years in this House, there is a fairly extensive change of personnel. In fact we know from our statistics that after every election there is a substantial, usually involuntary change as far as membership of this House is concerned. If you adopt the longer period, a Senator's term would not come up for renewal before the same people who initially appointed him or her. With a ten-year term there might be an entirely different cast of appointers. Therefore a different kind of judgment would be brought to bear, one which might be more objective and perhaps more strict than reconsideration by those who made the initial appointment. There would be other advantages as well.

These are details that could be canvassed one way or another with respect to changes in the Senate. However, in all of these changes we have to guard against a Senate that will become so active that it will want to challenge the powers of this House. On the other hand, if we are not to have a Senate that is any more active than it is now, it really is not going to be able to safeguard regional interests very well.

One consequence of a suspensive veto, especially if it is for only three months, and that would not be a very large inhibiting factor with regard to government legislation, would be that the Senate would likely use its suspensive veto much more often than it now chooses to delay a bill. This change would probably remove the Senate's inhibitions, and it might act much more callously toward government legislation than it now does. While this may not be very palatable to governments or members of this House, unless we are prepared to have a more active Senate, one which will exercise its powers on more occasions than it now does, there is no point in changing its present powers, because any change in the direction we have been talking about would certainly mean a Senate which wants to exercise its powers more frequently. We would have to accept that as a consequence of the changes we would make.

I would personally like to see changes with regard to regional representation in the Senate, which I talk of as being the great justification for the Senate's remaining as part of our system. However, the amount of representation