

needed to be these elderly people to have sober second thoughts in case the democratically elected people made mistakes.

An hon. Member: We do.

Mr. Knowles: We do; we can make mistakes in this House, but when we make mistakes, we have to go back to the people and let them be the judges. But their honours in the other place do not have to go back to anyone. They are there; it used to be for life, but now it is until age 75. There is just no way I can buy that as consistent with the principle of democracy. I hope, in these days when we are thinking about the constitutional set-up of our country, we will give serious consideration to the proposition that the other place ought to be abolished.

I know there are some who say it would be a reform to put it on an elected basis. That is something which can be considered, but in my view we have enough conflicts in this country already between the executive and Parliament, between the federal government and the provinces. This makes me feel that if we had two elected Houses, each with full moral authority, the chances are we might never get anything done. I go all the way and say let us abolish the Senate completely.

I used the word "reform" a moment ago. There have been some attempts to reform the Senate. Supposedly it was an important reform a while ago when their honours were given terms to the effect that they had to retire at age 75 instead of being there for life. That was really no reform. In fact, it cost us more money. Now we have to pay the ones who retired their pensions and then pay the new ones their full senatorial salaries. But, there has been kicking around for a number of years a proposal which was a bit of a reform, namely, a proposal that the senators have only a suspensive veto, that they not be permitted to veto a thousand times what we might pass in this House. That idea of a suspensive veto actually got into the constitutional resolution which we have been debating in other hours. It was Section 44 until it was put out. I want to register my strong objection to the government's action in yielding to the blackmail from some senators and cutting that Section 44 out of the constitutional package; it ought to have stayed. That is, indeed, another reason why we should abolish the Senate tonight. Let us show the senators what we think of the blackmail they gave the Government of Canada.

I do not want to take too long because I want a few others to have a chance to speak before we do the trick and finish off the Senate. That leads me to something I would like to say is very important at this juncture. With the removal of Section 44 from that other resolution, there are some people who are saying—some of them are some of our friends—that the Senate is being put in a position to veto its own reform or veto its own abolition which is a stronger position than it has ever had before. When that idea was spread around, of course some people asked me how I could agree to the constitutional package since I am so strong for the abolition of the Senate. I want to take a moment or two to point out that there is no truth to that assertion at all.

Abolition of the Senate

● (2110)

From the year one, which happens to be 1867, the Senate has had the veto over any bill put through the House of Commons. Even with respect to my bill we are debating tonight, if we were to pass it and send it to the other place, they would have the right to say yes or no to it. You heard what they said to the government about Section 44 in the package. They would probably say no. That has been the picture since the beginning of our nation's history. The Senate has a veto over any bill.

There is another way in which the Constitution gets amended. That is the one with which we are very familiar these days; that is, by the sending of a resolution from the Parliament of Canada to Her Majesty to be placed before the Parliament of the United Kingdom. I emphasize that what has to be sent is a resolution from Parliament, and that means a resolution from two Houses. That means that there is no chance at all of our sending a resolution, from this House of Commons alone, to Westminster asking for the abolition of the Senate.

That has been the case from the beginning of time, so their newly stated opportunity in the proposed Constitution to veto anything that is desired by this House, or desired as an amendment to the Constitution, is not something new.

I also point out that since 1931, when the statute of Westminster was passed, it has been clear that the Parliament of Westminster agrees to a resolution to amend the British North America Act only if it has the request or the consent of the Parliament of Canada. I heard those words just a few moments ago from another member who was speaking, and those words are there. It has to be on the request or with the consent of the Parliament of Canada. The Parliament of Canada consists of two Houses, so there we are.

From 1867 to the present, and particularly since 1931, the Senate has had a veto power over any move that might be made to reform it or to abolish it. The slightly different wording which appears in the constitutional package is not an increase, by one iota, of the strength and the power of the Senate. I have heard it said that surely if the House of Commons and ten provincial legislatures or governments wanted the abolition of the Senate, Westminster would do it; and that is a pretty far-out hypothesis, that the ten provincial governments would take that view and the House of Commons as well. But I submit that even then, the Parliament of Westminster would have to look at the statute of Westminster and say to itself, "This resolution came from one House, not from the Parliament of Canada".

When I talk in these terms, some people say, "Well, can we ever get rid of the Senate?" We can, when we have a government that has the will and the guts to do it. In this very country, we abolished, long ago, the Upper House of the province of Manitoba, we abolished the Upper House in Nova Scotia, and not many years ago the Upper House of Quebec was abolished. In none of those cases did those who were the members of those Upper Houses like it, but it was the will and determination of the government. Sometimes it was a life pension for those who held their positions; but when a govern-