

figure out why we are debating this bill tonight. The government House leader realized, and he told some of us, that there was a meeting he had to attend and that that would take him out of the House. He also realized that the Canadian Labour Congress is holding a reception, following the presentation of its brief to the government earlier today, and that that would take a few more members out of the House. He also probably realized that because the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada is holding its annual meeting, that would take all the good Tories out of the House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nielsen: Why are your fellows not here?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There is no secret about it. I just referred to the reception being held by the Canadian Labour Congress. A number of my colleagues are there, and I suspect that there might even be one or two Tories there as well. At any rate, I suppose the government House leader realized that this was not a night for anything heavy or serious and that we might as well take something that would at least make the evening entertaining and amusing. If we have treated this bill in this debate with some derision, Mr. Speaker, frankly that is how we feel about it.

I have enjoyed some of the things that have been said. I liked the attempt of the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) to suggest that something more important should be under discussion, and she got in at least a passing reference to the high cost of living. But, Mr. Speaker, I suppose that is what this bill does—it will enable two persons to cope with the high cost of living because the two who will get these appointments will receive \$18,000 salary per year, and a \$4,000 tax free allowance per year until they are 75 years of age.

Mr. Nielsen: And a voice in parliament.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Oh come, come—a voice in parliament! My hon. friend has been mouthing that all evening, either from his feet or his seat, and I suppose he takes encouragement from some of the things said by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid).

I rather like the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River. He is up there at the top of the western part of Ontario adjoining the province of Manitoba. He sits alongside my hon. friend from St. Boniface. By the process of osmosis he picks up some good ideas and a reasonable measure of decency. But I heard him say tonight that we should bring the north into the Senate so as to bring the north into the full stream of the public politics of Canada. Mr. Speaker, I know I should not call attention to the fact that you yourself are grinning, but you have no choice. The Senate—the full stream of the public politics of Canada? Come, come. Don't even try to tell the senators that; they know better. It seems the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River has got streams on the brain.

An hon. Member: Streaks?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Streaming, not streaking. They don't do that in the Senate.

The Senate

Mr. Ouellet: Yet.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): He said that this was bringing the north into the mainstream of Canadian life. Mr. Speaker, even on a night when we are sort of filling in the time because there are not many members here, please let him not give us that line that it is bringing a section of the country into the mainstream of Canadian life by putting it in the other place. How could anyone mouth such a sentiment?

Then he said another reason for wanting to bring the north into the Senate was to give it adequate access to the instruments of government. That is not the way I read the Senate. Mind you, if it is true, if some of the gentlemen and ladies over there, with their corporate directorships and so on, have access to the instruments of government that we do not know about, maybe this should be brought out and discussed in connection with conflict of interest. But, Mr. Speaker, that is not the mainstream of Canadian life over on the other side of this building. That is not the full stream of the public politics of Canada. That is a group of retired, privileged people who enjoy a salary of \$18,000 a year and \$4,000 a year tax-free expenses from the time they are appointed until they are 75 years of age, and there are a few of them over there who were appointed before that 75 year age limit was established and they go on for life.

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Don't get touchy about age.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I am not embarrassed about my age at all; I enjoy it. Not many weeks ago I had a debate on radio with one of my personal friends over there. I call them personal friends even if I do not respect them for being senators. I made the statement that not more than 20 or 25 of them over there were really working at the job and my friend, the senator, did not challenge that at all. We know when we go over there. How many are there? Of course, some good work is done in committees. But you do not need to keep 102 and, after this bill goes through, 104 Canadians on the payroll of this country just to get some committee work done now and then even by the excellent and hardworking 25 or 30 members of the other place who may be on the job.

● (2120)

Mr. Nielsen: Do you think they will pass this bill?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The Senate? Should we have a pool on how long they will take? I will put my nickel on five minutes. Mr. Speaker, now that I have said that, they will probably make sure that they take at least ten.

The hon. member for the Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) has been making a lot out of the fact that the Senate is there and, since it is there, should not the north be in it? Mr. Speaker, you do not correct a wrong by compounding it—by making it worse. If it is wrong in this country to have a body of individuals with authority to take part in the making of laws without any responsibility to the people of this country—if it is wrong to have 102 of them, it is all the more wrong to have 104.