

Retirement Age for Senators

course, if some people wish that this legislative body be a mere gathering of partisan politicians, whose only purpose is to protect the interests of their political parties, then I would agree that the Senate should be abolished. But I think—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must interrupt the hon. member for a moment to remind him that the house decided by a vote this morning that the question of abolishing the Senate went beyond the scope of the measure now before us. Therefore, I would suggest that he restrict his comments to the provisions of the bill itself.

Mr. Lessard (Lake St. John): Mr. Speaker, I shall comply with your decision. I was only referring to the abolition of the Senate in passing and I do not think I strayed too much from the scope of the discussion when I mentioned the possibility of doing away with the Senate.

The measure now before us advocates a reform of the Senate—at least, they call it a reform—but I think that the proposed changes amount to a very limited reform.

Under the circumstances and speaking in my own name, I feel we must endorse the government's proposal because one of the major objectives which would be attained following the limitation of senators' age would be a certain turn-over among members of the house.

• (2:40 p.m.)

In my opinion, when an hon. member has spent a few years here, and particularly in the Senate, he has made known all his views and he has few new arguments to bring forward. I, for one, consider that the role played by the Senate and by the senators is that of moderators. Some people would like to see very young men appointed to the Senate. As far as I am concerned I would be opposed to that; I would be in favour of a minimum age of 50 and, of course, a maximum age of 75.

Why? Because I consider that senators may be appointed on the basis of their knowledge and ability. I consider that the Senate is a place where ability in the various activities of the country must come as an inheritance, from knowledge acquired through experience in life.

In my opinion experienced men should be sought in various fields of activity so that, in a non-partisan way, they may be of some use to the Senate, the House of Commons and the Canadian people.

[Mr. Lessard (Lake St. John).]

It is an ideal place where men could impart their experience and knowledge to younger ones.

This is why I feel that we should maintain the Senate but alter its constitution to enable the various classes of our society to be well represented and put forward their opinions.

There is another point which I would suggest should be taken into consideration: appointments to the Senate should be made on a federal-provincial basis. I understand that this would require another amendment to the Canadian constitution. But in that regard, I entirely agree with the suggestion of Messrs. Faribault and Fowler that 50 per cent of the senators should be appointed by the federal government and 50 per cent by the provincial governments. Thus, the views of the various provincial governments and of the federal government would be well represented. This would have another advantage, Mr. Speaker, in that there would be automatically an emulation of some sort between the different levels of government so that the most outstanding representatives, the better qualified men, would be appointed to Ottawa where they would assert with an outstanding efficiency the views of their respective provinces.

I am convinced that the province of Quebec would delegate its best men here and that the other provinces would do the same. Thus, the federal government, not to be outdone, would be bound to call upon the best brains of our generation so that we would have in the Senate truly brilliant men instead of fading lights as is the case for many of them.

This would, in my opinion, be the best reform that could be brought about in the Senate.

For instance, the province of Alberta, which has had a Social Credit government for 30 years, has never been represented in the Senate. Saskatchewan had a socialist government for 18 years and it has no representative either in the Senate. That does not seem logical to me because I think those people could have made a positive and efficient contribution to the business of the upper house.

Some people claim that if there are only old people sitting in the Senate, they will have little inclination to represent the ideas of the younger generation.

Why, Mr. Speaker, am I in favour of appointing to the Senate only people who have reached at least 50 years of age? It is because I want a man to give his full measure in life until he is 50; then he can retire and give younger people the benefit of his