

*Retirement Age for Senators*

wonder if Members of this House really want the Senate to be reformed. In fact I wonder if the people of Canada want it to be reformed. Certainly in the ranks of the two old parties there has for a long time been a lot of talk about Senate reform, but nobody has done very much about it.

One hon. gentleman recently did try to reform the Senate, and the gentleman to whom I am referring is Senator Grattan O'Leary. He tried to reform it from the inside. He tried to say to his fellow Senators, "Look, we have got certain constitutional rights. We have to stand on our feet and exercise those rights." As a matter of fact he took this position two or three times, and even though I disagree radically with what he did I agree he had the constitutional right to take that stand. On one occasion he took the stand that the Senate should refuse to put something through that this House had just passed, and as a result there was a delay of a few days in the paying of unemployment insurance.

What happened with that attempt to reform the Senate? The result was an outcry against the Senate exercising this authority, and the result is that Senator O'Leary's reform has since become another one of those quiet revolutions, more quiet than revolutionary. The fact of the matter is that if the Senate did stand on its feet, did exercise the authority that it has to veto legislation, to hold up things passed by this House until it considered them in its own leisurely way, there would be the kind of hue and cry against the Senate that would result in my bill to abolish it having a better chance than it has had heretofore.

Though there has been a lot of talk about reforming the Senate, what the members of the old parties in particular really want is for it to continue in its own quiet way, causing as little trouble as possible but existing as a place that the Prime Minister of the day can use, as has already been pointed out, to place people for whom there is no longer any room in the House of Commons.

Before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, I just want to express again my very strong objection to one or two provisions in the bill, and we will restate that objection when we get into Committee of the Whole. It is pretty clear from the way we have been speaking that we do not favour this legislation. We do not favour an attempt to reform the Senate. We think it should be abolished; but if we have

[Mr. Knowles.]

a bill that gets second reading we will have to consider some of the provisions in it.

I want to say again that I think the provision that makes it possible for a Senator who is there now, who may have been there ten or 20 years, or who may be there for another 30, to retire at age 75 on a pension that would now be \$8,000 a year—without having to contribute one nickel for it—is just about scandalous. I thought the remarks made by the hon. Member for Essex South (Mr. Whelan) the other afternoon on this point were very pertinent. I know it is not always regarded as popular to make the kind of reference he did, but it is a reference that needs to be made.

This is a Parliament in which we have not found it possible to get the Government to agree to raise the old age pension to \$100 a month. Yet here we are being asked by the Government to give a free pension of \$8,000 a year to people who have already had the gift, for whatever number of years they have been in the Senate, of the indemnity and allowance that goes with a Senate appointment.

We have now accepted the principle that pensions should be on a contributory basis. The Canada Pension Plan is on a contributory basis, and in a sense old age security is a contributory plan because certain taxes are collected from our people to pay for it. Our pensions in the House of Commons are on a contributory basis. But here we single out a group of people who have enjoyed and are enjoying a period of time in the Senate, which they have been given as a free gift, and we choose to give them a pension under present terms of \$8,000 a year at age 75.

Furthermore, look at the choice we give these people. We say to a man over there who is now 75, and may have been there 10, 20 or 30 years, "You can retire now and take this pension, or you can stay. You can stay for the rest of your life at full indemnity, or stay three, four or five years, and then if you feel you can no longer carry on, you can retire and get that free pension". There is nothing else like it anywhere in the country. Even the judges' pensions, which are free pensions, do not have this latitude, this range of choice that is made available to members of the other place.

● (4:50 p.m.)

As everyone knows, Mr. Speaker, this bill provides that those who are appointed to the