

Abolition of the Senate

Practically everyone in Canada is in favour of patriation. Not everyone, indeed a vast number of Canadians, are not in favour of unilaterally entrenching this particular bill of rights in the way this government is proceeding. The entrenchment of the Senate veto and the formula for amending the Constitution by the provinces are matters which I oppose. I oppose the referendum proposal in the constitutional resolution. I oppose the veto to be given to the two provinces of Ontario and Quebec. It is a fence those two provinces are building around themselves. If you lived in any one of the other provinces in Canada, Mr. Speaker—and we have eight others—you, too, would subscribe to the theory that somehow we are secondary Canadians by the entrenchment of that veto for the two provinces. The failure to recognize certain Metis organizations, the failure to put the property rights, in fact, the failure to meet with and consult with the Metis and the insistence that certain Metis organizations and certain Indian organizations must belong to particular organizations before they will be heard, causes me to stand and oppose this resolution.

The absence of the supremacy of God is another reason which causes me to be in opposition to this particular bill of rights. In fact, I see nothing in this constitutional resolution but a divisiveness which will be in place forever and a day. Nothing short of separation or revolt will extricate Canadians from the mess we are in today.

Mr. Speaker, may I call it nine o'clock?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being nine o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, pursuant to the Chair's decision of Thursday, February 19, 1981.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT

AMENDMENT RESPECTING ABOLITION OF THE SENATE

The House resumed, from Thursday, February 19, consideration of the motion of Mr. Knowles, that Bill C-243, to amend the British North America Act, 1867 (abolition of the Senate), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

• (2100)

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, the hour has come.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles: It is time for the senators to realize that they have had their day.

The debate we have just interrupted, because it is time for private members' hour, is one in which, despite the differences we may have, we are all agreed that we want control of our own affairs here in Canada. One way or another, we hope we will soon enjoy that situation. It is perhaps significant we have turned from that debate on the patriation of the Constitution to another question which relates to the desire of Canadian people to control their own affairs. We do that in this democratic country by having a Parliament representative of the people in which we speak for those people and make laws on their behalf.

However, I suggest, as I have suggested a good many times in the last several decades, that it is not a democracy as long as there is a part of this Parliament—that other place—in which there sit men and women who have not been put there by the people of Canada, are not responsible to them, and in that sense do not represent the people of this nation. They are fine men and women. I number many of them as my friends, and some of them manage somehow to treat me as their friend. After one has said that, and after one admits they do good committee work, that they have produced some excellent reports on a number of subjects, and that about 25 of them work pretty hard at the job—

An hon. Member: Twenty-five?

Mr. Knowles: I am being generous. It is still a fact that according to the estimates tabled today we are spending about \$20 million a year to maintain an institution which is completely undemocratic.

Every member of that other place is appointed to it on the recommendation of the prime minister of the day. Once a person gets into that place, he is responsible to no one. Certainly he is not responsible to the people of the province from which he comes. He is not even responsible back to the prime minister who recommended his appointment. I think the time has come for us to take the position that we are a grown-up democracy and, just as we want our Constitution in Canada, not residing in some other country, we want a Parliament which is thoroughly democratic.

Of course there are arguments on this subject both ways. I have presented the arguments on our side of the proposition a good many times. The bill usually gets talked out. One always hopes that maybe this is the night it will not be talked out. I see my friend over there. Where did you come from?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I ask the hon. member to address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. Knowles: You are quite right, Mr. Speaker; I know where you came from. I noticed my friend across the way who usually defends the Senate; I see he is here tonight. Maybe he has had his say and there might even be a willingness on the Liberal side of the House to let the subject matter of this bill go to committee to see if we cannot find some better way than letting a group of unelected people have a continuing veto over the decisions made by elected members of the House of Commons. Of course there has been the notion that there