

British North America Act

the present time. So long as it exists in its present form, particularly at a time when there is a great deal of criticism of parliament generally, we could serve a better purpose by having a discussion of some of the fundamentals.

I recall some views of my colleague, the hon. member for Antigonish-Guysborough, when he referred to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre as holding some congressional-like views. I think, in this case, the hon. member for Antigonish-Guysborough is being a bit of a traditionalist. However, this could be the subject of debate on another day. In such a debate I would find myself agreeing with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Knowles: Would the hon. member permit just one more question? Does he favour the abolition or the retention of the Senate?

Mr. Cashin: I favour a thorough-going reform of parliamentary institutions. I think that we cannot approach part of the problem without looking at the over-all problem. If we are prepared to have a meaningful and in-depth analysis of our institutions, then I am prepared to examine all points of view. I think there is a very good case to be made out for the statement that our institutions in this country are not as effective at this time as they should be. I decry much of the criticism of our institutions which deals in personalities. I think that this is superficial. I do feel that we really have not gone into these matters in depth, and I would welcome the opportunity of doing that and listening to the views of one of the more informed members of the house, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

● (5:50 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise to support the bill of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) because long before I came to the house, I felt that if a referendum were held throughout the country, 95 per cent of the people would be in favour of abolishing the Senate. That is the question of the day. We are no longer in 1887 but in 1966 and we should get in step with the modern world.

I understand that today this body is not suited to take a vote. On the other hand, a vote should be taken on that bill and I wish most of the young members were here and the older ones, who keep hoping to go to that

[Mr. Cashin.]

dormitory for a rest, could be put aside. I wish the young members were here to discuss frankly our modern government.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that the great majority of the young members would be in favour of abolishing the Senate completely.

It would be one of the main reforms to make in our parliamentary system because, especially in view of the way appointments are made today, we have always considered the Senate a little as a cemetery of fossils. If only members who worked hard in politics, who devoted themselves to politics, were sent there, or even better, instead of being sent there, they should be paid a good pension and allowed to end their days among their family. But we force them to sit there. Old people of 75, 78, and 80 years old can be seen there. It is inhuman to keep old people there. Let us give them their pension and send them to rest quietly at home.

Today, more than that is done. Among the appointees are political organizers who never sat in this house, small politicians, not old but in the prime of life. They are sent to sit there and that is the greatest scandal of modern times, especially if you consider the appointments which have just been made and how they were received by the people. The public is disgusted.

Admittedly, an old man could be sent there to rest but sending a man in the prime of life there to sleep is to sacrifice him. And if he lived to be 80? That is why we support the complete abolition of that body.

The previous speaker said that it was an academic question. When I look at this, it is much more than an academic question. It is an economic question. We should not consider it only from an academic standpoint but ask ourselves how much we could save by abolishing that place, and that would be quite an amount.

Now, if only the legislation governing the Senate were improved so that senators would have to be elected by the people, like it is done in some countries.

If they want to look after public affairs and continue to legislate for the people, then they should go before the people.

For all those reasons and many others—this is such an interesting subject that it would take at least 15 days of discussion to say all we have to say—we shall vote for this bill.

When I see an hon. member who is getting on in years, I respect him. He has marvellous ideas. One always thinks of one's last resting