

Senate Role in Parliamentary System

Fourthly, it is rather unusual to see the Senate oppose the decisions of the House of Commons. I could go on and on.

Our parliamentary system is surely out of tune, because in spite of all possible good intentions, talents and goodwill, the Senate has become a club where are found people most of whom would be better off to get their old age pension and to remain at home, not because they can no longer serve Canada, but simply because their duties have been cut down to nothing, and under our parliamentary system, this is ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member for Rimouski is made a senator and then, he will have to realize as we do—he who shows such devotion—that he will be allowed to do very little when it comes to formulating legislation. All he will have to do is get up and sit down, that is do as his leader does, and cash his cheque.

He will not really be able to give the Canadian people leadership. Nor will he give advice to the House of Commons.

I have been in the House long enough to know this for a fact. No senator has ever met with us to give us advice about formulating legislation or to go over certain matters they know better than we do.

I see the hon. member for Chambly (Mr. Pilon). I hope he is appointed to the Senate that he might also realize that when one is made a senator one can only bless the Prime Minister for the appointment, because it is a reward. I do not wish him the appointment to get rid of him, but rather to reward him because he serves well the interests of the Liberal party.

It is rather ridiculous to deal with such an important motion on that level, but I do because to me that is obvious. As a good Liberal, one should welcome such a motion which, in fact, does not impose views on anyone and does not ridicule anyone. On the contrary, I feel it reflects to some extent the views of Canadians generally who would like a review to be made of the role of the Senate within Canadian parliamentarism, that there might be complementary ties between the House of Commons and its counterpart the Senate.

If the Senate were to disappear overnight, it would be a good thing for all Canadians. There would be less patronage, fewer political appointments. Indeed, what do the senators contribute as legislators? They make inquiries which in the final analysis solve very little,

[Mr. Fortin.]

and whose recommendations are never implemented.

I could give several examples of inquiries conducted by the Senate. The reports usually gather dust somewhere, and are never studied. It seems to me that problem should be studied in depth.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with a good deal of interest to the speeches made in this debate and, in particular, to the speech of the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow). The motion before this House would set up a special committee. The proposer of the motion went into some detail regarding his complaints about the Senate: he alleged that it does not represent the populace, that conflict of interest situations arise in it, and so on.

However, the proposer of the motion did not deal with the central issue of the procedure by which the Senate is to be amended or reformed. He read into *Hansard* proposals brought forward by the government of Canada at the constitutional conference. They included one that the manner of choosing members of the upper chamber should be discussed and reviewed with the provinces, and that the provinces should have the opportunity of naming some of the members of the Senate.

At least the motion before us is a little more sophisticated than the one brought forward recently by my hon. friend, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). His proposal would have amended the British North America Act by a resolution of this House, and was a little more difficult for some of us to follow. The notice of motion before us is more sophisticated because it suggests another line of action or investigation parallel to that which has already resulted from discussions that have taken place in federal-provincial conferences.

Those of us who have watched the Senate have, I think, mixed feelings about it. We know the problems. Thirty-five years ago as an undergraduate—and I am dating myself with this remark—I studied Professor Mackay's book, "The Unreformed Senate of Canada". Nevertheless, those of us who have come here and watched the other place must concede that useful work has taken place in it. I am thinking of the studies of science policy under Senator Maurice Lamontagne as chairman of the committee, the special committee on poverty under Senator Croll and