

would not be a bad thing if we had a senator to represent us, as long as it was a hard-working and useful person, well regarded by this House as a whole. I believe that even the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, who also represents a very large region, would like to have senators who could represent his constituents and his region. This would make exchanges here in Ottawa possible and would also double, I think, our work and action.

For instance, considering the amount of work which would be needed to develop ridings the size of the Manicouagan riding, I think that regional senators would be helpful, because they would greatly increase the amount of work done. That is a factor which would need being looked into as far as representation in the Senate is concerned. Another factor is the need to protect the rights of our minorities, those of the handicapped and those of people with a difference. I suggest that the Senate could play an interesting part in this respect, because I realize, having been here for the past two years, that when we legislate, we proceed in a piecemeal fashion. There is, of course, a logical follow-up with regard to the various bills based on centres of interest; on commitments in certain areas; this is why the senators could be responsible for an over-all view of the legislation. And also have as a main task to check some very specific aspects of our Canadian life, and in that sense, the protection of minority, native and handicapped people's rights could become part of their job description. Of course, we might look more fully into the whole matter, but that is not to say it would be better to abolish the Senate than to try to give it a much more worth-while role.

A well-conceived and modernized function of the Senate would include another important role, that of ambassadors of the Government of Canada: they could go out in the field to see what is going on, they could help with research, they could complement the members' work. I, for one, think that in the other place we have extremely valuable resources that could be maximized if we gave them in fact the means to do a good job and provided, of course, they wanted to use them. In the Senate, as elsewhere, there are people who are more or less effective, and it rests with them to enhance their prestige and make their work outstanding.

Some senators—I believe the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre will recognize that—have accomplished rather outstanding work throughout the years, and have produced very satisfying work from the point of view of giving it careful thought; they certainly improved some bills and without their contribution we could not have reached, I feel, the same degree of perfection.

After two years of experience in this field, taking into account the speed with which we legislate, the number of bills we study and introduce, I think it is not a bad idea to have a second house whose role it is to analyse, to reflect upon and to put those bills into perspective, acting, of course, as an extension of our own House. On the other hand, the interesting

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aspect of the proposal of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is that, as he said so aptly sometime this week, he managed to witness the exodus of, I believe, two thirds of the senators who were sitting in the other place when he first came here. So, without abolishing it, to some extent the hon. member did, in fact, see the disappearance of two thirds of the representatives or—

[*English*]

Mr. Knowles: All but for two.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maltais: Oh, very well, it is more than I thought. So, as can be seen, he succeeded as an elected representative in superseding the institution itself, because from the time he came here to the time he still has to do, I suppose that the whole Senate will have been reformed in its own elements. What remains to be reformed now is rather the operation. So what has to be done, as a chamber, is to find formulae that are interesting and satisfactory to Canadians as a whole. Mr. Ryans' tan book also proposed the abolition of the Senate, but those measures in my view are too drastic for the time being. What we have to do here is to find a genuine role for that institution. I know that basically the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre probably asks us to have the political will to change the Senate. I rather feel that his proposal is put forward with the real intention of asking legislators here to work out a real change in the operation of the Senate, and then he will most probably recognize it would be an error to abolish the Senate now. And for all those reasons, I feel rather inclined at this stage to vote against the proposal put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, in order to ask for a further study of the Senate as it now stands, and as it could be, and what real benefits we all could derive from it, we as legislators here and Canadians as citizens. My feeling is that the nation would be the better for it, and at this point in time where we are discussing the institution, the hon. member's proposal may be either too early or too late. However, this will be a most interesting discussion to consider at the conclusion of studies, to see what can be done with that institution.

I referred earlier to specific roles that could be given to the Senate, and I would like this discussion be taken up in committee with the hon. member, as well as with other members, to see what could be done. Certainly there are people in this country with tremendous experience that we should select in terms of the House rather than in terms of a party. And if they were given a specific role from the start, those people would be an asset to us, and everyone would benefit. Mr. Speaker, it being ten o'clock, I will conclude here.

● (2150)

[*English*]

An hon. Member: It is not ten o'clock.