

Douglas
Gauthier
Grégoire
Knowles
Latulippe
Martin (Timmins)
Orlikov

Perron
Peters
Plourde
Prittie
Webster
Winch—18.

Retirement Age for Senators

up to its obligations and has been efficient on several occasions. However, it seems that for some time now the Senate has not been playing its true part. That is why the general public and even some senators and members of parliament are under the impression that the Senate should therefore be abolished.

Mr. Speaker, before abolishing the Senate I think it would be advisable that hon. members ask themselves what changes should be made so that the Senate may recover all the prestige it used to have.

After having studied the Senate, I believe like many other citizens, that its role is that of a moderator, an expert, a consultant and, in some cases, even that of a judge.

If we want the Senate to fulfil the duties assigned to it when it was created at the beginning of confederation, in short, if we want the Senate to settle the problems submitted to it, only people qualified in the economic, cultural and social fields of our country should be appointed Senators.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that Senators have been appointed on a political partisanship basis was probably the greatest mistake and the main reason why that honourable and august body lost the prestige it enjoyed in the past.

One of the functions of the members of the Senate is to protect minorities. It is one of their most important functions. We may ask if they played that role; we may wonder if they showed any authority in that field.

For instance, if we consider how our French speaking compatriots were treated outside the province of Quebec I wonder if the constitution under which they had been appointed custodians of the rights of the minorities had also granted them executive powers to protect the rights of minorities.

In fact, some time ago this made me wonder whether it would not have been desirable for the constitution to grant them a controlling right over education within the provinces.

If one refers to the debates which were held in the Senate when the governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan abolished the teaching of French in those provinces, one can see that well-meaning and honest senators could not act effectively on that occasion, because education falls strictly under the jurisdiction of the provinces, which prevented them from expressing the viewpoint of the federal government and protecting as they should have done, according to their functions, the rights of the minorities.

Mr. Speaker, there are those who would like the Senate to be abolished altogether. Of

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I declare the decision sustained.

Mr. Pennell: Mr. Speaker, I was paired. Had I voted, I would have voted to sustain the ruling.

Mr. Lloyd: I was paired, Mr. Speaker. Had I voted, I would have voted to sustain the ruling.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lessard (Lake St. John): Mr. Speaker, I intend to take part in this debate but may I call it one o'clock?

[*Text*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Carleton.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, may I call it one o'clock.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps I should be allowed to mention that although the hon. Member for Carleton (Mr. Francis) did call it one o'clock the reason I recognized him was that the Chair was under the impression that the hon. Member was rising on a matter connected with a vote which had just been taken. I suggest that the hon. Member for Lake St. John (Mr. Lessard) should be recognized at this time.

[*Translation*]

I therefore recognize the hon. member for Lake St. John.

Mr. Marcel Lessard (Lake St. John): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At any rate, my remarks on Bill No. C-98, intitled "An Act to make provision for the retirement of members of the Senate", shall be very brief.

Mr. Speaker, when I first got interested in federal politics, some five or six years ago, like many Canadians, like the average citizen, I was wondering what was the true technical and political role of the Senate.

Obviously, it has a fine part to play from a technical point of view. In fact, it has lived