

*Senate Reform*

definition hon. members want to use, are living in poverty. However, if we look at the statistics issued by Statistics Canada every year on the income distribution in this country, we see that the bottom 20 per cent of our income earners got a smaller percentage of the gross national product in 1974, which is the last year for which we have figures, than they got 25 years earlier. They got about 4.3 per cent of the gross national product 25 years before 1974, and they got just about two-tenths of 1 per cent less in 1974. So I say that we have done nothing about poverty, despite an excellent report by Senator Croll.

If the hon. member wants to question my statement that we have no science policy, I advise him to ask for, as I have done, the correspondence which the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) and the minister in charge of science policy have received in the last couple of months about the lack of funding for scientific research and medical research. Close to 500 letters have been received by those ministers from scientists all across this country.

With regard to housing, there is no question that we have not provided affordable housing for the people in the bottom 40 per cent of the income bracket in this country. So I say that these senators who have done a commendable job have had their advice virtually completely ignored. That is why I say that the Senate as we know it today performs no useful function.

I go along with the sentiments expressed by Professor Forsey before he became a senator. He both questioned and rejected the idea that a reformed Senate could play a useful role in the democratic system of government which we have in Canada. But as I said at the beginning of my speech, I know very well that any proposal made by any member of parliament or any person outside parliament that the Senate be abolished would be rejected by the members of this House of Commons. I will not now speculate as to why they would reject. I simply make the assumption, and I am sure I am correct, that members of this House would not vote for a resolution to abolish the Senate.

So I have made a practical proposal, which is that if we are to have a Senate, as we have had since Canada became a country, if we are to appoint people to the Senate, and if we are to pay the expenses of maintaining the Senate, we ought to have a very careful look at the role of second chambers. There is a second chamber in Great Britain, in France, in Italy and in Germany. It may be that their second chambers are much more effective and useful than ours. It might help if we appointed people to our Senate for a fixed period of time. It might be useful if we let the provinces recommend a certain percentage of the people for the Senate. I do not think it is my job, and I certainly would not have the time, to list all the possible changes which could be made. I simply say, as have many people inside and outside this chamber over the years, that the Senate as it is constituted at the present time simply cannot, and does not, do the job which a useful second chamber should and could do.

● (1720)

That being the case, it is my suggestion that a parliamentary committee should look at the question, should hire

people expert in government to research the subject and should travel across the country, and possibly to other countries, to look at what other second chambers do and how they operate. If such a committee were appointed and took its job seriously, as I think it should, it could come back with proposals which would have merit and which I hope would be adopted by the House of Commons. Necessary constitutional changes could be made and we could, if we need a second chamber, have one which would perform a useful role.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying that the work of governments of the world and our country become more complex as government becomes more difficult and time-consuming. We could use some help, and if we had a second chamber with a real role to perform in this country, we would get it.

**Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Windsor-Walkerville):** Mr. Speaker, this is a subject which has been canvassed a good many times in this House over the years. In fact, I think one might say at a guess it has probably been debated more often here than in the other place, though it is also true there have been some very interesting debates on reform of the Senate sponsored by the other place itself. For example, I read an excellent address by Senator Croll two or three years ago in which he and other senators presented plans for reform of the Senate. Senator Croll's plan in particular was a very detailed one.

To this House the subject is a bit "old hat." I do not think we should overlook the originality of today's proceedings, however. I think we see a real step forward in our debate today, because the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) has broken with the tradition of his party. He is now not only taking the absolute position that the Senate should be abolished, but he is coming to terms with reality, as he might have put it himself, and is suggesting that there is perhaps indeed a role for the Senate.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** But he has got abolition in the motion.

**Mr. MacGuigan:** I know the hon. member for Winnipeg North is a man of great courage, but I do not think even he, because of his close association with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), has the kind of courage which would enable him to bring forward a motion such as this unless it also had the support of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I do not think he would want to face the charge of revisionism which he would encounter. I can only believe this indicates a fundamental change, a new look on the part of our socialist friends opposite, a coming to terms with reality. Perhaps it will be expanded shortly to other areas as well.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Carry on, senator!

**Mr. MacGuigan:** We are holding the post of Speaker of the Senate at some future date for the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** That is an unfriendly remark.