

British North America Act

maritimes and Lower Canada would not have federated.

I have just illustrated, I think, that these guarantees are no longer practical today. While they may, in effect, give guarantees to certain provinces of Canada they do so to the jeopardy of the smaller provinces. It is understood by some of the smaller provinces that, in relation to Ontario and Quebec as well as other larger provinces, they should have less members, but this is distasteful to Manitoba and Newfoundland. In that sense, if this reason for territorial equality no longer exists, then before we do anything about Senate reform we should get that particular clause amended.

There has been a discussion over a period of years, off and on, of the suggestion that we ought to have reform of the other place. It seems to me that reform of the other place would not now be very attractive to hon. members of this house, nor indeed would it be attractive to the country generally because of the fact, as was pointed out by the hon. member, the other place possesses such powers. I suggest, therefore, to hon. members that since we do have the situation in which the other place possesses a great deal of power which it does not use, our only interest in taking the drastic step of abolishing the other place is really of academic interest. If we were to pass this bill today, we would find we have a lot of things to work out.

I do not believe the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has really thought through this problem. I see the hon. member for Saint John-Albert (Mr. Bell) in the house. I am sure that in any discussion of reform of the other place we would have the hon. member for Saint John-Albert and the hon. member for Antigonish-Guysborough (Mr. Stewart) crossing party lines and tackling both myself and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. We would have questions of regional interest, the interests of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, which would of course be predominant over the political interests of these two distinguished gentlemen. So, too, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and I would be allied on the other side of the question.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): May I ask a question in order to assist the hon. gentleman? Was Newfoundland aware of this disparity when she came into confederation?

Mr. Cashin: I think at the time Newfoundland came into confederation, this was

not an issue. Perhaps the first time it has really been made an issue in Canadian politics, in a formal sense, has been in the introduction of this bill.

Mr. Knowles: Would the hon. member permit a question? Does he not realize that the clause in my bill about which he is talking is merely carrying forward something that has been in the British North America Act for 50 years? It is not something which is being introduced today.

Mr. Cashin: Yes, but it is a situation with which I do not agree. I do not believe any Newfoundlander or Manitoban could agree with it. I am quite serious about this. At the next redistribution, we are going to make an issue of it.

Mr. Knowles: Would the hon. member permit one more question? Has he not put his finger on the point? The major purpose of this bill is to get rid of the Senate, but the matter with which my friend is dealing relates to distribution and may be dealt with at the next redistribution.

Mr. Cashin: Whether or not the hon. gentleman is getting rid of the Senate, I think he is perpetuating an unpleasant situation. I think his bill could be drafted in a much better way.

Mr. Stewart: May I ask the hon. gentleman a question? I think his time is just about up, but I want to ask him this question. It is sometimes suggested that one of the better purposes performed by the Senate is that it permits a prime minister a good deal of flexibility in reshaping his cabinet. I can ask this question of the hon. member for St. John's West without, I hope, inviting too political an answer. I thought of addressing the question to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, but I did not dare to do so. Is there some validity in this argument?

Mr. Cashin: Perhaps in certain instances; but I do not think it is of such prime importance, at least to the hon. member for St. John's West, as to be dealt with further at this time.

In conclusion, I should like to say, as I said at the beginning, that I like the opportunity to talk about our institutions. I appreciate the sincere interest of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre in reform generally. While there are indeed some anomalies in the other place, I really do not see that any purpose would be accomplished by reform at