

OFFICIAL RESIDENCES ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

The Senate resumed from Thursday, June 3, the adjourned debate on the motion of Hon. Mr. McDonald for the second reading of Bill C-241, to amend the Prime Minister's Residence Act.

Hon. M. Grattan O'Leary: Honourable senators—

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed that the honourable Senator O'Leary speak now instead of the honourable Senator Belisle?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Hon. Mr. O'Leary: Honourable senators, I had no intention of speaking on this bill, but having read the kindly remarks made about myself by the Leader of the Government when he introduced it I thought it only fair to say for the record that, while I did take a certain initiative in securing the happy result which is this bill, many others, including distinguished members of the party of the Government Leader, had a great deal to do with it.

I first had the idea of a residence for the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition when I spent an evening many years ago with Mr. St. Laurent, who was then the Minister of Justice and our representative at the United Nations. He was living in the old Roxborough Apartments, which have since been demolished. It occurred to me that this was hardly a fitting place for a man of his distinction who was contributing so much to Canada at that time. Later on, when Mr. George Drew became the Leader of the Opposition, he too was living in the Roxborough Apartments. I thought at the time that that was not a fitting place for the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition; that he could not there conduct the business or even the social activities imposed upon him by his office. So I determined that I would see what I could do to obtain a home for the Opposition Leader which would be consonant with the dignity of his position. This involved securing a fairly large sum of money in order to buy a home suitable for the purpose.

Of course, belonging to the poor man's party, I realized at once that I had to go to my Liberal friends to secure the funds necessary to purchase a home. Therefore, I repaired to Montreal to see an old friend—in fact, he had financed my campaign in Gaspé in 1925—Mr. J. W. McConnell, who has since died, God rest his soul. Mr. McConnell had gone over to the heresy of the Liberal Party. However, I appeared before him and told him what I was trying to do. He said to me immediately, "O'Leary, you are right. I believe in what you are doing. I will begin by contributing \$10,000 to the fund, but I will do more than that. I will give you the names of ten other people and you will go to them and tell them what I have done. If they don't come across, you come back and tell me."

The first name of the list was another distinguished Liberal, Mr. Stanley McLean, who also has since passed away. He was an old party opponent of mine. We used to have fierce arguments on what I considered was the heresy of his party and he considered was the heresy of

mine. But more than that he was a staunch north of Ireland Protestant. My friend Senator Walker, whose ancestors were at the gates of Derry, will understand that.

I went to Mr. McLean and told him what McConnell had said to me, and he replied, "O'Leary, I will tell you what I will do for you. I agree with you entirely. I will give you a luncheon at the York Club, and I will invite eight or ten tycoons." I use his word—he was one himself. Then he added, "After we have had a good lunch and brandy and cigars, I will call upon you to give them the same pitch you gave to me." That is what he did, and I remember that the late Senator Wally McCutcheon was one of those present. After I finished my talk I received immediately \$35,000 which, in addition to the \$10,000 I had received from Mr. McConnell, enabled me to purchase a residence for \$40,000.

Incidentally, that residence was sold to us by a daughter of Sir George Perley. That was her contribution. That magnificent place in Rockcliffe, which I am sure would sell today for \$150,000 or \$170,000, she gave to us for \$40,000.

In the intervening years I became chairman of the committee, on which there were Liberals. One of them was Mr. Duncan MacTavish, who was later a member of this house. Incidentally, I am looking at a member of the Senate who contributed very generously to this project. Perhaps he cursed himself afterwards for doing so, but that is what he did.

I must in all fairness say that 75 per cent of the money I collected personally over the years, amounting to \$175,000, came from my Liberal friends. All of them agreed to this residence. It was a good thing for Canada. It is a magnificent home.

When Mr. St. Laurent was Prime Minister he used to go over to George Drew's for lunch after Mass on Sunday. I recall his telling me, "I would prefer this home to 24 Sussex Drive."

Honourable senators, when I hear young people today condemning the party system and decrying the work of Parliament, I remember that one of the men who gave me money was Mr. McConnell, and that when Mr. Pearson occupied the position he gave me \$10,000. All of those men knew they were going to get nothing from me, for there was nothing I could give them.

To maintain a house the taxes on which were \$2,000, and to buy a new this and that costing \$7,000, \$8,000 or \$9,000, forced us to go on collecting money. I, as chairman of the committee for over 20 years, when I had contractors coming in to build this or that or to paint the house, never even considered whether they should be Liberals or Conservatives. In fact, on looking back now I have an idea that most of the contracts were given to Liberals, but that did not matter. This was a home for the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition; this was the glory of our parliamentary structure, and a testimony to the fact that not only do we permit criticism, but we pay people to criticize.

This is something I wanted to entrench and perpetuate, and that is what I did. A year ago, I realized that the law of diminishing returns applied in this situation. The