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THE SITUATION.

Of the measures of the session of Parliament, which closed last Saturday, the most conspicuous was the continuance of railway subsidies, though under new conditions and in increased amount. Two measures of a strong political character, in a party sense, Redistribution and the Reform of the Senate, failed; in the Commons the first was carried by large majorities; the former was rejected by the Senate, and the latter withdrawn. The Senate voted with a rope round its neck; but the courage of its convictions was shown in the rejection of the Redistribution Bill. This was a new offence, the first and second, in the eyes of politicians, having been committed last session, in the rejection of the Yukon Railway Bill, and the Drummond County Railway Bill. The rejection of the latter was not final, the Bill in an amended form, causing a saving of over half a million of dollars, having been passed in the past session now closed. It cannot be said with certainty that public opinion condemned the rejection of the Yukon Railway Bill. It is quite conceivable that the constitution of the Senate might be improved; but no change in its constitution ought to be made as an act of political vengeance. The Senate even now occasionally performs a useful service; as its utility consists in its independency, it may be more useful when it differs in complexion from the other House. If it becomes habitually factious, like the old legislative councils of Upper and Lower Canada, and antagonistic to the other chamber, a crying need for its reform would bring a remedy.

On the whole, the Government acted wisely in withdrawing the Senate Amendment Bill, which might more properly be called the Senate Suppression Bill. The world, as actually governed, is far from having reached the conclusion that second Chambers are unnecessary, undesirable, or useless. The consensus of opinion everywhere, or with so few exceptions that they scarcely count in the aggregate, is in favor of second Chambers. And what is their proper function? Not to be mere echoes of the other branch of the Legislature; but to

express the sober, second thought of the community, in the form of revising and occasionally rejecting measures hastily put together, the defects of which become more apparent under prolonged discussion. It would perhaps be better if all second Chambers were, in some form, representative bodies; but where they owe their existence to selection, in the form of executive nomination, it would never be tolerated, in a Democratic country like ours, that they should persevere in rejecting a measure after it has received the endorsement of the electorate, in an election in which it found a distinct issue, after the first rejection. Where there is a representative Chamber, and a nominated Chamber, the former is apt to be aggressive, which is indeed natural, for the presumption that its mandate is clearer and more certain than that of the nominated Chamber. Nevertheless the latter has its rights and its duties, as well as the other Chamber. Senate reform is one thing, Senate suppression, on critical occasions, by submerging it in the other Chamber, instead of bringing reform, would give to the other Chamber that unchecked sway which the wisest men of all countries have, with rare exceptions, deprecated as a public calamity.

One feature connected with the railway subsidies is the random way in which Parliament was called upon to vote the money. In Europe, a railway charter is granted only on the companies filing plans and giving all the information necessary to an understanding of the whole question. Here these preliminary precautions are not taken; if required, the requirement would be more difficult to comply with than these; but it is certain that no company here will undertake to build a railway until it has sent engineers over the ground and knows pretty well what the difficulties are, and what the cost will be. Why should not Parliament have this information, before it grants a charter? It should certainly have it before it grants a subsidy, whether in the form of an absolute gift, or on conditions. But as a matter of fact, we find Parliament voting bonuses to a number of roads, in the dark, not knowing, in one conspicuous case, or a series of cases, as they appear remotely connected, whether several of them, pieced together, in future are intended to form another continuous road from Ontario to Port Simpson, or the Pacific. Subsidies are got for different sections of what looks as if, when pieced together, will form another Pacific Railway. It is mentioned, as a mere suspicion, in Parliament, that this is intended; on which the Premier asks, what if it is? or something to that effect.

Another point which is shrouded in obscurity is, what is the connection, if any, of the C.P.R. and the second Pacific line, which is apparently being evolved out of the darkness of a series of subsidized sections, capable of being at last all linked together? Mackenzie & Mann are connected with these subsidized sections, and one member of the House, Mr. J. Ross Robertson, believes that Mackenzie and Mann and the C.P.R. are one concern, not two. But a difficulty in believing this arises when Mr. Osler, a member of the House of Commons, and a director of the C.P.R., opposes these subsidies. The Premier replies that, according to his information, there is between these two concerns no good feeling. What are we to think? It is difficult to believe that Mackenzie & Mann could do what they are