

is just an attempt to help the Senate to give better service. It may not succeed, but I think it is worth trying.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Mr. Robertson:** Honourable senators, while I would have been willing yesterday to have had my motion passed by the unanimous consent of the Senate, I feel indebted to the honourable gentleman from Kootenay East (Hon. Mr. King) for having adjourned the debate until today, for honourable senators who were not at our caucus meetings have thus had the opportunity to express their views.

When I introduced my resolution last year I made it quite clear that not even my deputy leader (Hon. Mr. Hugessen) was in my confidence. I was acting entirely on my own responsibility, and nobody knew in advance anything about the contents of my motion. The situation is different this year. For one thing, there is no immediate legislation before us. It would have been a simple thing, of course, to have moved the adjournment of the Senate for two or three weeks, and when we returned, if there was still no legislation, to move a further adjournment. But let us remember that in the last week or two of this session some of the most important legislation ever to come before parliament will be placed before us for consideration. It was for this reason that I took counsel with every senator of both parties I could find. I explained my difficulties to them, and as a consequence a special committee was appointed to give this whole question full consideration, and it was generally felt that it was my responsibility to propose some procedure to this house. A second caucus was held by the Senate, at which time I outlined in detail what is included in my motion. Various questions were raised about the size of committees, and so on, and in explaining how I arrived at the size of certain committees, I confessed that I had been largely responsible in recent years for increasing the membership of such committees as the one on Natural Resources.

At this time, with all deference to my colleagues in the government, I want to say that I do not believe it would have been possible for legislation to be presented in this house any more capably than it has been presented in the past by those honourable senators I have called upon to perform that function.

**Hon. Mr. Haig:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Mr. Robertson:** I do not wish to make any invidious comparisons, but I have always entrusted the mysteries of finance to my

honourable friend from Toronto (Hon. Mr. Hayden), and I think his explanations have always been crystal-clear.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Mr. Robertson:** There is no question about that. And I think I can say without hesitation that I myself have acquired some-skill in gathering information and explaining bills.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Mr. Robertson:** That is not the point, however. The point is that if the legislation on transportation which is anticipated is sent to us in the last week or so of this session, no matter how clearly any member may explain it, honourable senators will have only a short time to deal with it, and they will be pretty well limited to information acquired by attending the sittings of the other house and from reading the newspapers. We cannot get away from that fact.

I have often been asked, "Why do you not get more business to the Senate in the initial stages of the session?" Well, I have done the best I could, and I think I did enjoy some measure of success in this matter a year or two ago.

The best illustration of legislation coming to us late in the sessions is the budget bill. Practically twenty minutes after the estimates have been passed in the House of Commons they are placed on my desk. One of the most embarrassing things I ever had to do was to ask the Senate to approve expenditures of billions of dollars without there being any opportunity to examine them in any way, shape or form. It will be recalled that two years ago I suggested that the estimates be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance in anticipation of the Appropriation Bill coming to this house. Despite some scepticism my suggestion was accepted, and I think it is now generally recognized that the work of the Finance Committee in dealing with the estimates has been excellent.

I am now proposing that we adopt the same procedure in relation to other important legislation. The numbers mentioned for the committees may not be right. If they are not, I shall be the first to admit it. The proposal may not work, but I should like it to be tried. I suggested that these committees have a membership of not more than seventeen because I have found that to be an effective membership; and I suggested six committees with that membership because they would embrace the total number of senators, 102, and every senator would be a member of at least one of these important committees. At present, of course, we could not carry out