

And one thing is sure—the more people of goodwill of all nations get behind the League, the sooner shall we realize the prophetic vision of Tennyson:

Till the war drum throbs no longer
And the battle flags are furled,
In the parliament of man,
The federation of the world.

On motion of Hon. Mr. Murdock, the debate was adjourned.

INITIATION OF PRIVATE BILLS

AMENDMENT OF RULE

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN rose to move:

That Rule 114 be amended by deleting therefrom the following words which appear in lines 3 and 4 thereof: "eight days before the meeting of Parliament."

He said Honourable members, this is the motion of which I gave notice last Thursday. It is the culmination of efforts made by this House over a period of several decades to obtain from the other House such a degree of complementary legislation, or such an alteration of the rules as would more evenly divide the labour and responsibilities of legislation between the two Chambers.

This House has suffered more than it has merited by reason of the fact that in the Senate, much more than in the other Chamber, the work is done in committee. The degree of energy and efficiency which our committees give to pondering over and threshing out not only the detail, but the substance of legislation, is wholly out of proportion to the attention which the public gives this assembly. This is a condition which we should not particularly lament. I do not know that it really makes much difference. The important thing to us all is to secure what we feel are worth-while results, regardless of whether our work attracts the attention of the public or not.

However, we recognize that the work of the two houses is different in character. The practice has grown up—in fact it has existed from the very beginning—of initiating the preponderance of legislation in the other Chamber. In the speech that I made on this subject when the inquiry of the honourable senator from Russell (Hon. Mr. Murphy) was under review, I expressed the opinion that with only one member of the Government in the Senate it would not be possible to increase to any great extent the proportion of legislation initiated here. A bill introduced into this Chamber must be guided through committee. Its long and arduous journey necessitates on the part of the person guiding it a thorough command not only of the his-

Hon. Mr. MICHENER.

tory of legislation on the subject treated, but of the details of the particular measure under consideration, and on the part of each member of the committee ability to understand the viewpoint of various interests affected and to weigh all the representations advanced. While the burden of guiding Government legislation continues to rest upon the single member of the Government in this Chamber, it is not possible to increase very greatly the volume of government measures introduced here.

In the debate to which I have referred the Senate considered the wisdom of enabling ministers from the other House to enter this Chamber in order to conduct their legislation, and of securing a similar and complementary concession from the House of Commons. This idea received considerable support from both sides of the House. I ventured to express the view that no great danger was to be apprehended from such procedure, and that it had many advantages. The proposal did not meet with universal favour in this Chamber, however, and in any event it seemed wise that we should proceed step by step, moving where we felt surest of our position, and taking care that we made no mistake in effecting a reform along this line.

Consequently, what emerged with universal support, namely, that portion of the proposal which looked to the initiation in this Chamber of all the private bills presented to the Parliament of Canada, was seized upon as likely to afford the groundwork for an advance.

Though the proportion of private legislation as compared with Government legislation is not increasing, being, I believe, about the same now as it was twenty or thirty years ago, yet there is a continuous expansion in the volume of private bills, with the growth of the country, and if this Chamber undertakes to conduct the initiation of all private measures it will take upon itself a measure of work and responsibility which will very considerably increase its activities.

With this object in view I held conferences with other members of the Administration, the result being that on the same day upon which I gave notice here the Prime Minister gave notice in the other Chamber of an amendment of the rules of that House looking to the attainment of the end to which common assent had been given.

I shall now read the rule to which the present motion refers, and make clear its application. The rule, which is No. 114, reads as follows:

Any person seeking to obtain a private bill shall deposit with the Clerk of the Senate,

eight days before the meeting of Parliament, if it is intended that the bill shall originate in the Senate, a copy of such bill in the English or French language, with a sum sufficient to pay for the translation of the same by the officers of the Senate, and the printing of six hundred copies in English and two hundred in French. The applicant shall also pay the Clerk of the Senate—

and so forth. This is the rule which it is proposed to amend by deleting the words "eight days before the meeting of Parliament."

The omission of these words, as proposed by the amendment, would appear to have the effect of permitting the introduction of a private bill into this House at any time. Honourable members might apprehend that inconvenience would result from the opening wide of the door for the whole session; but I draw attention to rule 110, which says:

No petition for any private bill is received by the Senate after the first three weeks of each session; nor may any private bill be presented to the Senate after the first four weeks of each session; nor may any report of any Standing or Special Committee upon a private bill be received after the first six weeks of each session.

Clearly, under this rule, the Senate has effective control over the time during which private bills may be presented. Indeed honourable members may even consider the control to rigid. I am advised, however—and such has been my experience over a brief period—that notwithstanding the rigid terms of rule 110 we have virtually never, on a proper case being made out, refused a private bill the right of admittance to this House. The Senate, on the recommendation of the Committee on Standing Orders, grants an extension of time, particularly when long adjournment inconveniences those intending to bring in private bills. The Committee on Standing Orders has very seldom refused to extend the time for the introduction of such legislation into the Senate. All that I desire to emphasize is the fact that under the proposed amendment the introduction of private bills into this House is facilitated by the sweeping away of the restriction which requires them to be introduced eight days before the meeting of Parliament. Thus an invitation is extended to those who desire private legislation to submit their case to this House; and only such control is reserved as may be necessary to prevent the abuse of the open door.

In order to see that the effect of this amendment shall be what is desired, namely the transference of the initiation of private bills to this Chamber, it is necessary to bear in

mind the action that is being sought in the other Chamber. The rule of the other Chamber which it is sought to alter is Standing Order 93. It reads as follows:

Any person desiring to obtain any private bill shall deposit with the Clerk of the House not later than the first day of each session, a copy of such Bill in the English or French language, with a sum sufficient to pay for translating and printing the same; the translation to be done by the officers of the House, and the printing by the Department of Public Printing—

I ask honourable members to note that what follows is to be struck out by an amendment proposed.

—and if such bill is not deposited by the time above specified, the applicant shall, in addition to the charges for printing and translation, pay the sum of five dollars for each and every day which intervenes between the first day of the meeting of the House and the date of the filing of the Bill; but such additional charge shall not exceed in the aggregate in any one case the sum of one hundred dollars.

This latter portion, which will be stricken out if the motion in the other House is accepted, had the effect of enabling the introduction of legislation into that House upon the payment of a penalty. Furthermore, the tax of \$200 which is imposed by the succeeding part of the same rule for the introduction of a Bill in the other Chamber is to be increased to \$500, while the tax in this Chamber remains the same.

The main feature of the alteration now proposed to be made by concurrent action in the other House is, of course, the increase in the fee; and I think honourable members will concede that the increase is so substantial that it will be to the interest of those who have private legislation to advance to have it introduced here. While this increase is the main feature of this proposal, the other features also are important, because in the case of the Senate the door is more widely opened, and in the case of the House of Commons it is more narrowly closed.

Hon. Mr. LYNCH-STANTON: Is there any definition of a private bill?

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Every bill is a private bill that is not a government bill.

Hon. Mr. LYNCH-STANTON: Is a bill introduced by a member of this Chamber always a private bill?

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: No. I do not know that I should attempt the exacting task of definition without more adequate preparation. A bill which relates to the general public interest or affects a general public