

For my part I am largely disposed to agree with him. The titles that we have at present in this country and in the motherland are all relics of the feudal state of Great Britain. If I may be pardoned, the title which I myself bear is a relic of this old state, and I do not think that in a democracy like Canada such titles can ever take root. I agree with my hon. friend, they are not in consonance with the spirit of the age. That is one view and consideration which I think is well worthy of our attention. But at the same time the prerogative of the Crown has been followed for so many centuries and is yet bestowed with such acceptance generally that I do not believe that, even in such a democracy as we are, very serious objection can be taken to the manner in which the prerogative has been exercised.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN (South York): In the bestowal of these honours in England, the Prime Minister assumes the responsibility, as I understand it. There have been honours bestowed in Canada. Do they go on the responsibility of the advice of the Prime Minister of this country, or, who assumes the responsibility?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I have no objection whatever to answer the question of my hon. friend. In England there are certain honours which are bestowed every year and which, I understand, are simply a matter of course, and go to the Sovereign upon the imprimatur both of the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition. That takes place as a matter of course every year. We have not come up to this here. I have no hesitation in saying that in my humble judgment—and this is the position which I always took when I was Prime Minister—it is a prerogative of the Crown and not a matter to be covered by ministerial responsibility. I believe that on a matter of this kind the Governor, for the time being, whoever he may be, is the representative of the Crown, and he would not make any recommendation to his Sovereign unless he had previously consulted his Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister also would probably consult his colleagues. That is the manner in which it should be done, but I would not follow the doctrine so far as to say that this is a case in which the ministerial responsibility should be exercised. The matter, in my humble judgment is not of the importance that should be covered by ministerial responsibility. It is altogether a matter for the prerogative of the Crown.

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN: It is not so in England. There is a responsibility assumed by the Prime Minister in England, and apparently by what the right hon. gentleman says, there is no responsibility assumed by the ministry for honours given in this country.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I believe in England also, as a matter of present development, the Prime Minister is generally consulted by the Sovereign, but I believe there are circumstances in which the Sovereign would think himself justified in exercising his own prerogative and I doubt if any prime minister would make it a matter of ministerial responsibility or ministerial crisis.

The question which the hon. member puts to me is an evidence that these titles have become antiquated; they are no longer suited to the spirit of the age. There was a time when the prerogative of the Crown in these matters was exercised upon the sole responsibility of the Crown; and when a minister would not think of interfering. As democratic institutions developed even in England, the Sovereign has been in the habit of consulting his ministers, but I do not think it has come to the point of being covered by ministerial responsibility. In the present age there is always, we know, even in democracies, the tendency to confer these honours and distinctions. We have only to go to the other side of the line where we know that titles are given not by the Government but by the popular will. I understand that in the French republic the Legion of Honour, instituted by Napoleon in 1804, is more sought after than it ever was in the Napoleonic regime, so that as my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce has said, this is a little concession to human weakness. Men will be men to the end of time, I suppose. My hon. friend, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, was very kind in stating that he would not deprive us on this side of the House of these rewards. I am sorry I cannot return the compliment, because my hon. friends opposite do not deserve any reward. At all events, for the time being, we are content, as he said, that virtue should be its own reward, and we claim nothing else.

Motion of second reading of Bill negatived.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

Mr. ROBERT BICKERDIKE (Montreal, St. Lawrence) moved the second reading of Bill No. 4, to amend the Criminal Code. He