

Honourable senators, while I rise here with a mixture of awe and wonder to address this house, I still would like to remind you that my connection with the Senate, indirectly, at any rate, or in a small way, has been a very lengthy one. I notice that the senior member of the Senate was appointed back in 1926. Well, fourteen years before that, as a young reporter I was reporting and watching the proceedings of this house.

I remember the days when Sir Richard Cartwright was Government leader, and I have a very vivid recollection of Sir George Ross being brought into this chamber in a wheelchair, and speaking powerfully and dramatically from that wheelchair against Sir Robert Borden's naval aid bill of 1912—a speech which in fact resulted in the bill's rejection. Then on through the years I knew, and remember well, many other famous figures of this house: Raoul Dandurand; Charles Beaubien; Frederick Bédouin—a man of massive intelligence; Sir James Loughheed; my long-time friend, my hero of public life, Arthur Meighen, and many another—men who have given or gave to this chamber its memoried greatness, its old and just renown.

Honourable senators, there is something I would like to say to you, if you will permit me to do so. I was told on coming here that I was now coming to an atmosphere of relaxed and civilized sophistication. I was assured that the strident partisanship of another house—and they added, rather slyly, the strident partisanship of a certain editorial page in this country—had no place or bearing in a chamber such as this. Honourable senators, I think I should confess to you at once that I shall find difficulty in adjusting myself to an atmosphere of that kind. I am a party man, I am a partisan, I am a Conservative without prefix or qualifications.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. O'Leary (Carleton): I believe in the two-party system. More than that, I believe that much of the political uncertainty and instability in this country at the present time stems from the fact that too many Canadians have forgotten what the party system is about, and too many Canadians have gone about year after year scoffing at it and deriding it. I think it is an interesting reflection that for one hundred years, from the day of Lincoln to the present time, the United States has managed to maintain its major two-party system and has fought off all challengers to that system by third parties, by splinter parties, by groups or by factions. I think that the reason may be found in the fact that the American people, the leaders

of public opinion in the United States, understood what their two-party system meant and were resolved to maintain it.

I myself have gone to a number of political party conventions in the United States. The last one I attended was in Philadelphia, in 1948. It was a Republican convention. There were, of course, the usual antics which we Canadians have a habit of decrying, but, honourable senators, on the floor of that convention as ordinary delegates were the presidents of sixteen American universities, the leaders of the professions, the leaders in law, in industry and in commerce. At a convention a few years before there was a spectacle of that great and distinguished lawyer, John W. Davis, sitting, not on the platform but on the floor of that convention taking an active part in the routine proceedings.

Honourable senators, I have attended many conventions in Canada, going back to the days when I was a young reporter—in the days of Sir Wilfrid Laurier—and I have not seen on the floor as delegates the leaders of our professions, the leaders of the Bar in Canada, our eminent bankers, or our great captains of industry, although afterwards they were heard to condemn politics, to decry politicians and public men. This, honourable senators, I believe firmly has been in large measure responsible for the cynicism regarding parties and politicians and public men which exists among our young people in this country. The oldsters have simply not set them an example.

And while I am condemning businessmen, I am not going to forget my own profession. Thomas D'Arcy McGee once pointed out that at the time of Confederation there were one hundred public journals in this nation discussing politics and public affairs. Well, we have more than one hundred daily newspapers in Canada at the present time, but I ask you to look over their political designations and I venture to say that ninety of the one hundred would put themselves down as independent, which in most cases means that they are merely neutral, that they have no opinions at all and are afraid to stand up and be counted.

A few years ago I was vacationing in a certain province of this country where a provincial election was being held. I was anxious to find out what the election was about and so every morning I studied the editorial page of the leading newspaper in that province. For three weeks not a single reference appeared on that editorial page about the election, but on the day before the voting that particular paper carried a long editorial on the fate of democracy in Bulgaria.