

I have not entirely made up my mind, and I do not intend to offer an opinion, as to whether such a provision will exclude legislation to abolish the Senate. It may have that meaning. I was much concerned about that question at the first, but I will try to show honourable senators why, in my thinking, I am not now so much concerned about it.

I point out that the resolution before us today should not be considered by the Senate in relation to its effect upon the Senate. It should not be considered from the standpoint that we are protecting our positions as Senators, because of course there is no danger of the present body of Senators being thrown out of office. It must be remembered, however, that this legislation, when passed, will be in force for many years. We must therefore consider the fact that the Senate is a protection to minorities and to classes in the community, and it is our duty to see that that protection is not lightly thrown away. If in our consideration of this resolution we say "You cannot touch the Senate", all honourable senators know what a protest would go up all over this country. People would say: "Those old fellows in the Senate are just trying to protect their jobs and keep themselves in office for life." But if it is our duty to assert ourselves, such a protest should not stop us: it is highly important that the Senate should not find itself involved in some issue when popular opinion could be diverted against it to the harm of our institution.

I would point out to my honourable friend who asked a question earlier (Hon. Mr. Euler), that when this legislation is passed the minorities and classes who look to the Senate for protection will be better protected than they are today. You may ask, why that is; what protection is the Senate today? Suppose that between now and the next general election there was a financial crisis and times were very bad in Canada, and there was a resentment against what is called capitalistic forms of government; and suppose that a socialist government were elected, which passed a resolution in the House of Commons asking for abolition of the Senate, and the Senate refused to sanction it, the socialist Prime Minister of Canada, fresh from the people, with a good substantial majority, could have no difficulty in going to the socialist government in England, where so much is now being done about the House of Lords, and securing the abolition of the Senate. Under those circumstances, I believe that we would not have as much security as we had under a different type of parliament, when the House of Lords was really a factor in protecting rights. Therefore, I say to my honourable friend that at its worst this amendment by preserving the Senate, will give more protection to the

minorities and classes in the community than they would have if the question of Senate abolition were left in the hands of the parliament as constituted in Great Britain today.

That brings us to the point where we must decide whether we will go at least as far as the resolution, or insist on going further and thereby settle the whole question of the Senate at this time. After most careful consideration I say that we should not go further and place ourselves in a completely false position. The propaganda which could be worked up against the Senate would be used to our disadvantage. But I repeat that, if such action were necessary, there is no reason why we should not do our duty regardless of its effect on ourselves.

To further answer my honourable friend, I ask these questions: Who says that the Senate is a protection for minorities? Who says it is a guarantee of provincial rights? And who says that for these reasons the Senate ought to be perpetuated? The answer is: The people of Canada. And that may include the premiers of the provinces. I notice that Premier Douglas of Saskatchewan has recently expressed himself in this matter. No doubt Mr. Duplessis has some feeling on this question, and the other premiers will have views as well. Then, when the Dominion-Provincial conference takes place, any provincial premier, cabinet minister or representative who feels that the Senate is, as we believe it to be, a security and a guarantee to minorities, will have the opportunity of saying to the federal government: "We want not only the security that the Senate, in the matter of voting itself out of office, will have to agree; we want the further security that it be so tied up that it can never be abolished." Those who feel the necessity for the preservation of the Senate could make such a demand. After giving careful thought to the problem, it seems to me that the best way in which existing security can be made more secure, if further security in that regard is needed, is to let those who will get the benefit of that security stand up and carry the fight into the conference of January 10 next, instead of placing the Senate in the impossible position of asserting itself at this time.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Buchanan: May I ask the honourable senator a question? If the amendment is passed, will the government change its method of appointing senators?

Hon. Mr. Farris: The government, with the consent of parliament, can do so; but without the sanction of the Senate no change can be made.