

THE SENATE

Tuesday, March 21, 1950

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

DISTRIBUTION OF BILLS

INQUIRY

On the Orders of the Day:

Hon. Mr. Leger: Honourable senators, before the Orders of the Day are proceeded with I wish to refer to order No. 2, for the second reading of Bill I, an Act to amend the Criminal Code. Amendments to the Criminal Code are usually important and it would appear that those in this bill are no exception. The bill contains seven pages, and although it is on my file today it was not there yesterday. Consequently, I have had no chance to study the measure. Prior to this session the custom used to be to place copies of bills in our mail box in advance of their introduction in the Senate, so that we might have an opportunity to look at them, but so far as I am aware that is not now being done. I simply want to call the attention of the leader of the government to this situation, and ask if it cannot be remedied.

Hon. Wishart McL. Robertson: Honourable senators, the question raised by my honourable friend is an important one. It is important that all honourable senators be supplied with all bills that we are to deal with before they are explained, but it is particularly important in the case of my honourable friend from L'Acadie (Hon. Mr. Leger) for no other member of this honourable house reads the legislation as carefully as he does.

I am advised that this bill was distributed yesterday. My honourable friend from Toronto (Hon. Mr. Hayden) is prepared to explain the bill today, but if the honourable gentleman from L'Acadie (Hon. Mr. Leger) prefers that it stand, I am sure my honourable friend from Toronto will concur. As an alternative I would suggest, subject to what the honourable gentleman from L'Acadie may say, that the bill be explained today, and that then, if no discussion on it, the Whip (Hon. Mr. Beaubien) be asked to adjourn the debate, so that anyone who wishes to speak on the bill may do so later. I am in the hands of the Senate in this respect.

Hon. Mr. Leger: I am quite willing that the explanation be given now.

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NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

Hon. Donald A. MacLennan: Honourable senators, before the Orders of the Day are proceeded with I wish to call the attention of the Senate to an article which appeared in this morning's *Citizen*.

Hon. Mr. Haig: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. MacLennan: Apparently the writer of this article thinks that the work of the Senate, no matter how important it may be, does not make news and he intimates that the Senate is on the way out.

I have heard many members of the other place make facetious remarks about the Senate, and after looking them over carefully I have come to the conclusion that these members never hope to get into the Senate.

Hon. Mr. Haig: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. MacLennan: Moreover, they are incapable of making speeches worth listening to. Any speeches that I have heard in the other house concerning the activities of the Senate were as insipid and as colourless as saltless porridge.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh.

Hon. Mr. MacLennan: The writer of this article gives a little clue as to the manner in which the Senate could get into the news. He points out that because the leader of the opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig) attacked someone or other he received "a considerable measure of publicity". I suppose that means that the way to get one's name in the paper is to attack someone.

This newspaper gives a further clue, and a valuable one, as to what is news. On its front page there appears this headline: "Minnie The Cat Adopts Mouse." That is news! Minnie the cat can get into the news, but the work of the Senate cannot. The article says, among other things:

The Senate has ceased to be news. The hard fact of the newspaper business is that the papers must publish news, and the Senate does not qualify.

I presume "Minnie the Cat" does qualify.

The article goes on to say that the speeches in the Senate are not of a high order:

The quality of debate in the Senate is by no means outstanding, but the subject matter has usually been so threshed over, several times, in the House of Commons that there are few grains of interesting news left by the time the Senate gets to it.

I do not regard myself as a judge, but in the estimation of those whom I do regard as judges, the speeches made in the Senate last session, and so far this year, have been most excellent. A few days ago we heard an outstanding speech from the honourable senator from Sorel (Hon. Mr. David).