

ingmen who give their lives to industry, who are to be numbered by the hundreds of thousands, are as vitally interested in control of industrial policy as those who have a capital investment in dollars and cents, and they are equally entitled to have their voice heard in the shaping of that policy. I believe that if the government will recognize this fact and, as I have said, set an example in the legislation it may bring down with respect to the railways, it will be going a long way in helping to solve what is perhaps the most difficult and complicated of all industrial problems of our time.

This is not a new suggestion; it is one I made in this house during last session, and it is in accord with what under Liberal policy has been advocated, and indeed effected in part with respect to the Canadian National railways. It was under a Liberal administration that Labour, for the first time, was given a place on the board of directors of the Canadian National Railways. That was a step in the right direction. Now the time has come to go a step further, particularly when there is a reconstruction being carried out such as that proposed. The government should see that Labour is given its due place beside the other factors that contribute to the successful operation of the railways, those who have furnished the capital and those who are giving their technical skill, as well as the community that is helping to serve all three.

These are the two measures that are referred to as the ones which will occupy the time of the house during this preliminary portion of the session. There are four or five other subjects mentioned in the speech from the throne; they may be referred to as comprising the portion of business to be taken up in the new year. Each, I think, deserves a word of reference. The first to which I will refer, since it also was mentioned by the Prime Minister the other day, is the measure which will provide for the redistribution of representation in the House of Commons. In one sense of the word this is a matter of routine; every ten years a redistribution bill comes before parliament, and at this time it comes in the natural order. In considering the question of representation in the House of Commons, may I submit to my right hon. friend in reference to the representation in forthcoming parliaments for the next ten years, that this is an opportune time for the presentation to this house of measures which will help to make more representative and effective the representation of the people in parliament. The time has come when measures respecting proportional representa-

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

tion and the alternative vote should be introduced.

Mr. STEWART (Lethbridge): Why didn't the right hon. gentleman do it?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend asks why did we not do it, and I shall reply to his question. During the years the late Liberal administration was in office it is true that most of the time we had a majority in the House of Commons, but during all the time we were in office we did not have a majority in the Senate. When at different times, we made efforts in this house to carry through resolutions with respect to proportional representation, they met with determined opposition from hon. gentlemen opposite who were then on this side. It soon became apparent that we were consuming the time of parliament to little or no advantage in pressing forward these measures at that time because, had they carried through this chamber, they would certainly not have passed the other house. But the situation is different to-day. Hon. gentlemen opposite have a majority in both houses and can, if they so desire, put through these measures at this session, and before the next general election; and I submit that if parliament is to be made as representative of opinion as it should be, these measures ought to commend themselves to all hon. members of the House of Commons.

As a matter of fact, there are in this house at the present time no fewer than twenty-seven members who hold their seats, not as representatives of the majority in the constituencies from which they come, but as representatives of a minority. The largest number of minority representatives are among hon. gentlemen opposite. There are some in the Liberal ranks and some in the ranks of the United Farmers and of the independent groups, but there are no fewer than twenty-seven members of this house who are occupying seats here notwithstanding the fact that they do not represent the majority of the electors of their constituencies. I do not say that the representation of all of those constituencies would be completely changed had proportional representation or the alternative vote been adopted. Probably in some instances some of these hon. gentlemen would have continued to represent their constituencies, but there would have been in that event a note of satisfaction in that we should have had reason to feel that this parliament was truly representative of the majority of the people in the constituencies from which its respective members had come.