

*Suggested Senate Reform*

the lower house will practically belong the initiation of matters of great public interest), in the house which has the sober second thought in legislation—it is provided that each of those great sections shall be represented equally.

It will be seen, Mr. Speaker, that those were considerations that were in the minds of those who were charged with the problem of drafting our constitution at that time. It was to be a house of sober second thought on legislation. One might wonder how much second thought has been evident in some legislation that has been before us. May I say without any reservation and with admiration for those who have done it, that there have been a few members of the other house who have demonstrated what that other house could do by their clear and critical analysis given to some of the legislation that has gone forward from this house. But even in the face of such able representations as have been made, may I say particularly by the Hon. T. A. Crerar in regard to the fundamental principles of the supremacy of parliament and the rule of law, the brevity of the debates that have taken place on these very important issues, following the presentation of clear and wise comment on legislation already dealt with, does raise the question as to how completely the other house is able, as at present constituted, to fulfil the extremely important tasks which were to be assigned to it.

Since the days when Sir John A. Macdonald made the remarks I have quoted, immense changes have taken place. There is a difference in the presentation, and there is a tremendous difference in the character of the country. No longer is it possible to speak of western Canada simply as an agricultural area; that is particularly true of British Columbia with its immense industrial development, as well as the other prairie provinces with their new resources. Nevertheless the principle he asserted is one which has been in the minds of those who have discussed this subject over the years, and most certainly the principle that it shall be a place for a sober re-examination of the legislation adopted in this house.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, unless the other house is to be a second chamber of review and reconsideration with a detachment that possibly might not be so easy in this house, for many reasons, then I suggest that we are paying a great deal for the form without having the reality. The mere fact that many men and women for whom all of us have the highest personal regard now occupy the seats in the other house is no answer to the demand that is being made in every part of Canada for the reform of the second house if it is to be an effective part of our parliamentary system. I, of course, feel sure we

need make no argument on this side to support the lifelong dream of Mr. Mackenzie King and the pledge which has been the pledge of the party to which the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and his government belong.

I shall read the resolution I propose to move, but before I do so, I repeat that it leaves to the government the responsibility for initiating whatever steps should be taken to start the proceedings so that at the beginning of the next session we may not have vague generalities about Senate reform, such as there have been in times gone by, but we may have some concrete proposals as to how we are going to tackle this subject. May I point out also before I move this resolution that I am not prepared, nor do I believe the members of this party or hon. members of the house generally are prepared, to consider abolition of the second chamber until we have had an opportunity to examine the possibility of real reform. I do say, however, that unless there is some step taken towards reform, the demand from the people of Canada will bring about the abolition of the Senate because the people of Canada find it very difficult to understand why it is necessary to pay the amount of money that is now being paid for the maintenance of the second chamber under conditions as they now exist.

This house saw fit to increase the amount of money received by the members of the Senate at the same time as the step was taken in this house over the opposition of many hon. members in regard to that move—

**Mr. Nicholson:** No opposition in the other place.

**Mr. Drew:** It is for us to speak about the house in which we sit. So far as this house was concerned, there was plenty of opposition, and vigorous opposition, to the step that was taken. There was also opposition to this being done in the case of the other house, particularly at a time when no steps had been taken to reform the other house to make it an effective part of our parliamentary system under our federal constitution.

I therefore move:

That all the words after "That" to the end of the question be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"the government should give consideration to initiating the necessary consultation and inquiry respecting reform of the Senate so that all appropriate steps may be taken, including such matters as the method by which the members of the Senate should be chosen and their tenure of office so that the Senate may more effectively discharge the constitutional function it was intended to serve as an integral part of our parliamentary system."

**Mr. Speaker:** Perhaps I should point out to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) that there is on the order paper a bill moved