

ing in that debate, said that he could not suggest any reform which would be wise, although I think we all agree that the conditions are not desirable as they at present exist. It was mentioned by the Prime Minister in that debate that if the Senate saw fit to throw out a Supply Bill passed by the House there was no remedy under the constitution and the country might be starved.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. That happens in England to-day.

Mr. LANCASTER. Yes, and that might happen in Canada and there would be no remedy. And yet we calmly go on here from year to year with that possibility staring us in the face. Now, I do not speak in any partisan spirit, because what I am going to say might apply in the case of any party which was in power for a number of years. But the right hon. gentleman may not be afraid to-day because there is a majority of his former political supporters in the Senate and from party loyalty they possibly would not reject a finance Bill of this government. But, if the Senate is of any use at all it is as an independent institution and were it really independent it could control the country against the will of the elected representatives of the people, a thing which I do not think was ever contemplated by those who framed the British North America Act. We claim to have responsible government in this country, but let us take a chain of circumstances which might possibly happen and let us see if we actually have responsible government. Suppose the government brings down a Bill to this House and a certain number of its supporters object to it and joining with the members of the opposition there is a majority which amends that Bill in a way which the government does not like. That Bill would go to the Senate and the Senate as at present constituted, having a majority of one political stripe, the Senate might amend that Bill against the wishes of the majority of the elected representatives of the people and in favour of the will of the government which appointed the Senators and this elected chamber would have to submit. We know that in practice the government is supported by those elected to support it in any measure it submits, but in theory the government is responsible to the House of Commons and they have to run the risk of proposing measures which may not meet with the approval of their supporters. But, with the Senate endorsing the action of the government, the government would remain in power in a case such as I have instanced when under all proper constitutional rules it should resign. Now, what has been done by the House of Lords in England may at any time be done by the Senate of Canada.

Mr. LANCASTER.

Indeed, the Canadian Senate has already thwarted the will of the Canadian House of Commons. For three years this House unanimously agreed upon a measure for the protection of people at railway level crossings. The influence of the corporations was not sufficient to prevent the House of Commons passing that measure, but through some influence, or in their judgment, or whatever you may call it, the Senate rejected that measure and last session such was the deadlock that the majority of the Commons felt finally obliged to accept the Bill in the mutilated form which the Senate forced it upon us. Speaking from a national point of view that was an evil. The fact was that thirty-five senators constituting a majority in the Senate were able to force their will on the twenty senators who were in the minority and on the two hundred and twenty-one members of the House of Commons combined. That is not right and it shows that the Senate is not serving a good purpose in this country. The ex-Secretary of State, Hon. Sir Richard Scott, moved in the Senate a resolution beginning:

That, in the opinion of the Senate the time has arrived for so amending the constitution of this branch of parliament, as to bring the mode of selection of senators more into harmony with public opinion.

Senator Scott was hardly out of the council chamber until in his capacity of senator he expressed the feeling that the interests of the country required the adoption of some means of bringing the constitution of the Senate into harmony with public opinion. This opinion of a prominent member of the Senate is another evidence that to-day, in the year in which we are now living as distinguished from the year 1867, gentlemen in that branch of the legislature believe that there is a need of bringing that Chamber more in harmony with public opinion. I do not know what suggestions Senator Scott made; I think he proposed something in the shape of an election, but I think it stands almost as a self-evident proposition that the electing of senators would cause no better result. If they did not, when elected, impede the legislation of this House, they would not be necessary. If public opinion was expressed to them when they were elected in the same form as it was expressed to the members of this House from the smaller constituencies, and if they did impede the legislation of the members of the Commons elected from the smaller constituencies, they would be out of place and an obstruction and an ill to the country. So I cannot see that there would be any benefit in electing senators. You would have either two men to do one man's work or you would have one cham-