

The motion was then carried.

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## SENATE

**Mr. MILLS** moved, seconded by **Mr. GEOFFRION**, and the Question being proposed,

“That, in the opinion of this House, the present mode of constituting the Senate is inconsistent with the Federal principle of Government; and that our Constitution should be so amended as to confer upon each Province, in some way, the power of appointing the Senators which represent it.”

He said that if the question of a nominated Chamber had been submitted to the country at the time of Confederation, they would have decided against it. It was simply a step in the direction of the English House of Lords, and he maintained that such a House was altogether unsuited to the circumstances of Canada. In England the peers gained great experience in a Lower House, and by their action there gained the confidence of the country. They represented a great power in the country there. They possessed power which was not conferred on the Senate here. In England each body, the Crown, the Lords, and Commons was a check on the other, whereas in Canada what power had the Commons over the Senate? The Government of course raised their own friends to that Chamber, and so when there should be a change of Government the Senate would not be in harmony with the incoming administration.

There was no valid reason for the principle of nomination being introduced into this second Chamber. The power of the Commons lays in its representative character, and until the Senate is on the same basis it would never be a great power. If a House was formed of the representatives of one class only, it could never be an influential body. He complained that a Senate, while nominated, must necessarily be greatly one class. He stated the Legislative Council while nominated, had little influence but that so soon as it became elective, its character at once changed, and it very soon included some of the ablest men of the country. He believed that a nominated body must steadily degenerate. In a country like Canada changes succeeded each most rapidly, villages became cities, hamlets became towns, and in proportion as the country prospered and progressed so it became necessary that a Legislative body should not be long-lived.

The Senate at present had no hold on the popular sympathy, and was no check on the Commons. The only benefit of a second Chamber was to press on the other Chamber, the thought that their action had to be submitted to another power, and so there was less likelihood of the rights of a minority being overridden. Each Province ought to have the control of its own appointments so that they might be confident that the rights were upheld by both bodies. The two modes in which only a Senate could properly be appointed were first to divide the whole country into Electoral Districts for the

Senate, or that the appointments should be made by the local Governments. He did not think that reform should be delayed until that reform was absolutely needed and thought the Constitution of the Senate should be modified at an early day.

**Mr. ROSS (Victoria)** complained that such matters should be allowed to occupy the time of the House.

**Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD** said he always listened with pleasure to the remarks of the member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) but in this instance he would have preferred that his speech had been presented as an essay or review in one of the periodicals of the day. The hon. member, however, had not exhausted the subject, and he would suggest therefore that he should elaborate his address and give it to them in a paper which could be read quietly in leisure time.

**Mr. MILLS:** Will you act on it?

**Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD** said he would act on it if he agreed with his hon. friend. The hon. member had said however that the English constitution was a matter of slow development, and was only altered when expedience showed that some portions of that constitution acted prejudicially to the public interest. Then Canada might take an example from that. Her constitution was one under which the country was well governed, and prosperous, and against which there was no complaint. No evil as yet had arisen from the constitution of either Chamber or the balance of power between the Executive and the Legislative. Why then not follow the example of England, and work the system so long as no evil resulted? If it should be found that the Upper Chamber was obstructive and that a change was absolutely required for the well working of the Commonwealth, it would then be open to move the resolution, but at present he thought the House would certainly vote it down.

**Hon. Mr. BLAKE** was surprised the Premier appeared undecided on this subject, and willing to consider it again; but considering his antecedents, perhaps they should not wonder at his want of fixed principles, on this as well as all other subjects. His remark that it might in future be for the benefit of the commonwealth to abolish the Upper Chamber altogether was not one fit to be made, having regard to the constitution under which we lived. He (Hon. Mr. Blake) believed the institution of an Upper Chamber was essential to the federal system, and should be regarded as absolutely sacred. It was to make it efficient that Mr. Mills propounded his resolution.

The form we had, the substance we had not, because nobody could deny that, however respectable the second Chamber might be individually, its deliberations had not that influence on the country, nor did it take that prominent part in its affairs, nor exercise that control over general legislation that was expected, and which it was, in his opinion, essential it should have. It owed a very great proportion of whatever influence it possessed to that large number of members, who represented the people through having been