

THE SENATE

Friday, September 8, 1950.

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Acting Speaker (Hon. J. H. King) in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

On the Orders of the Day:

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Honourable senators, I am advised that the House of Commons have temporarily suspended the debate on the Appropriation Bill so that they may give immediate consideration to item No. 5 on their Order Paper, the Canadian Forces Bill, which stands in the name of the Minister of National Defence. Of course at the moment I am unable to say how long that house will take to deal with this measure, but there is some indication that debate on it will not be extended. In the circumstances I have been asked to request that the Senate sit tomorrow, with a view to having the bill passed through this chamber and given Royal Assent this week. It occurs to me, judging from some optimistic views I have heard expressed, that the bill may be passed by the Commons this afternoon. If this should happen, and the bill come to us tonight, honourable senators might prefer to sit this evening and dispose of the legislation then rather than meet tomorrow morning. Therefore, in anticipation of the bill reaching us tonight, when the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne is adjourned this afternoon I am going to suggest that we adjourn during pleasure to meet at approximately 5:30, when I hope to have some information as to the progress made by the other house.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Senate resumed from yesterday consideration of His Excellency the Governor General's speech at the opening of the session and the motion of Hon. Mr. Dupuis for an Address in reply thereto.

Hon. S. S. McKeen: Honourable senators, in my remarks this afternoon I shall perhaps repeat some of the things that already have been said in this debate. But very often, when asked by people in British Columbia why the government does not take certain action or why someone does not make a certain statement, I have found upon looking into the matter that such action has been taken or

such a statement made. Therefore in my opinion some things cannot be said too often, for many people miss important matters which are referred to only once.

I want first to congratulate the mover (Hon. Mr. Dupuis) and seconder (Hon. Mr. Barbour) of the Address. They both performed their functions nobly. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the honourable senator from Vancouver South (Hon. Mr. Farris) on his most able presentation of the facts surrounding the strike and the Korean affair, and the senator from New Westminster (Hon. Mr. Reid), who yesterday covered similar ground from a different viewpoint.

Today I intend to put before the house some thoughts and ideas which are perhaps not entirely my own, but which I have heard expressed, and which should, in my opinion, receive immediate consideration by this body. I believe that in matters affecting labour the Senate provides a more appropriate forum for discussion than does the House of Commons. Honourable senators are free to express their own opinions without regard to the effect they may have on re-election to office. In that respect I think the position of a senator differs from that of a member of the House of Commons in the same way as the office of a judge in Canada differs from that of a judge in the United States, where one cannot but think that the decisions of judges must at times be influenced by an impending election. Further, members of the House of Commons may have certain personal views but be fearful to express them because of their possible effect on public opinion. A government may hesitate to take a certain step because public opinion is not yet receptive to it; and to stay in power a government must have the support of the majority of the public in any action that it takes. The work of the Commons, therefore, instead of following a straight and positive course comes down to a series of compromises in the right direction. The Senate, on the other hand, is blessed with freedom from the anxiety of election results, and can help to provide good government by making proposals which, though not popular at the time, may prove wise in the future.

As to the question of strikes and work stoppages, I believe that parliament should give serious consideration, not to the "detour" which was taken for expediency, but to the building of a permanent road towards the solution of labour problems. In the beginning labour was badly treated, and we in this country for years have been fighting for freedom, not only of workers but of the citizens generally. We have been trying to get