

even more often than does the House of Commons. For example, during the five years when R. B. Bennett—later, Viscount Bennett—was Prime Minister of Canada, he filled thirty-three senatorial vacancies. I believe the records will show that approximately one-third of the personnel of the Senate changes, on the average, every five years. I am not one of the senior members, though I am rapidly approaching that position after only some fourteen or fifteen years. When I was appointed I was No. 93 on the roll; now I am No. 24. That change in my position of seniority here does not take account of a considerable number of senators—perhaps 24 in all—who were appointed after me and who have since died.

I repeat, we welcome you new members. You are bringing with you here the new spirit of Canada. We will give you every assistance. There is only one thing we would say to you: you are here, not as Liberals, but as Canadians, and we hope that in considering questions you will forget politics and think only of the welfare of Canada.

Hon. Mr. Duff: You bet!

Hon. Mr. Haig: I say that because each of you, like the rest of us here, has a very high responsibility, resulting from life appointment to this great national legislative body. The world is facing new issues all the time. We thought that at the conclusion of the war our really serious problems would be solved, but they seem to be increasing in number every year. I am sure all our new members realize that for the remainder of their lives they will hold the destinies of our country in their hands. It is a heavy responsibility.

Just a word on another point. I have often been asked how the leader of the opposition chooses his deputy leader and his whips. People say to me, "You have such a small group that you do not need much assistance in the way of deputy leader and whips." I sometimes take the trouble to point out a little secret: If you have a kicker in your party, put him in a job and he will change to a booster and friend. Well, you can look around you now and see why certain members have been chosen for honourable positions.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, Oh!

Hon. Mr. Haig: Here is another point. The leader of the government in the Senate is chosen by the Senate, but the leader of the opposition is chosen by his own supporters. Once the leader of the opposition gets into office he cannot be put out except at a caucus, and he is the only one who can call a caucus. So I am not going out of office for a day or two.

Now let me deal with the Speech from the Throne. The first thing that strikes me about the speech is that it gives very little information as to the government's legislative program. True, it does propose abolition of appeals to the Privy Council, amendments to the British North America Act, and government assistance in housing and the construction of the trans-Canada highway. Considerable reference is made to other legislation, but there is little indication of its character.

The Speech from the Throne does not say much concerning the proposed legislation to abolish appeals to the Privy Council, but the bills have been distributed, and we can read them. As to the intended amendments to the British North America Act, the government merely says that it is asking for legislation permitting it to deal with that part of the act which affects federal matters. I suppose a conference with the provinces would follow. The Speech from the Throne gives little indication of the form the new legislation will take. Therefore, if I do not devote much time to it in my remarks, honourable senators will understand why.

First I shall deal with the question of the abolition of appeals to the Privy Council. I do not wish to refer to what has been said in another place, but speaking personally, and on behalf of the party I represent, I feel that the proper place for final appeal is the Supreme Court of Canada.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Haig: The Canadian Bar Association, in convention recently at Banff, recognized some of the difficulties consequent with this change in procedure. Before dealing with the attitude of that convention, I want to say that I believe 90 per cent of Canadian lawyers are in favour of the proposed change. One reason for this, of course, is that we want to show the world that we are an independent nation; but the real reason from the lawyer's standpoint is that wealthy corporations have the means to go to the Privy Council, whereas poorer litigants have not.

The history of the Province of Ontario tells us that at least once a year for many years one of its former premiers, Sir Oliver Mowat, went to England to appear before the Privy Council on questions in which provincial jurisdiction came into conflict with federal jurisdiction; and in nearly every case his appeal was successful. I repeat, that 90 per cent of the lawyers in this country—probably 99 per cent—are in favour of making the Supreme Court of Canada the court of final appeal.

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: The percentage is too high.