

*Suggested Senate Reform*

to the Senate were limited to certain select people whose quality, judged by one standard, was impeccable. As time has gone on, I feel that the necessity for a change has become more obvious. Whether there has ever before been such a great disparity with regard to numbers in the Senate, or anything approaching it, I do not know.

We have only to look back twenty years to a time when the Senate was a most useful body. When Mr. Meighen was leader and when Senator Dandurand, another distinguished figure, was on the opposite side, I believe that for five years the Senate did most excellent work. It was not of the same political complexion during all those years, as I understand it. At the beginning, I believe there was a Liberal majority and at the end I believe there was a Conservative majority. But to the everlasting credit of Lord Bennett, he left the Senate to do its own work. As I say, in it there were a number of distinguished men. People who were in Ottawa in those days tell me that it was the Senate debates and not the debates in this house that were most frequently attended. In the Senate there were a great many men of experience and distinction both in political and business life.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier has set out one inescapable reason for continuing the Senate. I think there is another equally good one. It should be continued not only to protect the rights of the smaller provinces but also to provide a place where experience of various kinds can be rendered available for the public service.

As we all know, there are a great many people who could be useful in the public service but who are not prepared to face the rigours of an election. It seems to me that there is a great deal to be said for bringing to the service of their country in this way people of distinction and experience. If you look back just twenty years I think you will find that at that time the Senate was highly regarded by people who came here to Ottawa. The Senate committees were doing good work. Even yet they do good work. Let us be fair about the matter. In spite of the difficulties of keeping democratic party life alive in the Senate, we should not overlook the fact that much good work has been done through the Senate committees.

I think I have nothing more to add, Mr. Speaker. We have had this situation before us for many years. I think the Senate has fared ill at the hands of Mr. King. I never could understand how a man with so much belief in the parliamentary system could disregard and degrade one of the arms of parliament. As I say, I have been disappointed

with the present Prime Minister, who seemed to me to be perhaps in an especially good position, with his strong majority, to give a lead in a different direction. I was deeply disappointed when I read those words of his which seemed to me not only to say that he did not propose to do anything in the matter but even went to the extent of saying that he felt no responsibility. I find that to be an extraordinary position, Mr. Speaker. Here we have, admittedly I believe, one arm of government which has been grievously weakened; at any rate, it has been grievously weakened in the public mind. For the Prime Minister not merely to say, as I read what he said here, that he was not going to do anything about it, but to go further and really say that he felt no responsibility in the matter, is something that disturbs me greatly.

This amendment, as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) has stated, is phrased in such a way as not to be interpreted to be a vote of confidence. I therefore hope that it may perhaps be accepted.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to say just a few words in support of the amendment to the amendment proposed by my leader the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar (Mr. Coldwell). As he said, we are in favour of reform of the Senate provided it is that drastic reform which was suggested in our subamendment, namely its abolition.

I listened with interest to the remarks made just now by my friend the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Macdonnell). If I may say so, he has strengthened my belief that the time has come to abolish the Senate. He argued that there are men of distinction whose wisdom it is good to have in our legislative councils but who do not wish or do not feel able to face the rigours of an election. Mr. Speaker, it is exactly that attitude to which we are opposed. We believe that anyone who plays any part in the legislative process should be directly responsible to the people. In my view the statement made by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Macdonnell) reflects the attitude that prevailed when the Canadian parliament was established in 1867. The men of that day believed in democracy. Democracy was to be trusted, but not all the way. There was the notion that somehow or other there had to be people apart from those who were elected who were in a position to check on the elected representatives of the people. In our view democracy has grown up. In our view democracy is to be trusted. In our view the day has come when all those who play a part in making the laws of this country