

Suggested Senate Reform

the sale of oats and barley at from 10 cents to 15 cents below the domestic price in the United States? If so, what has been the reaction of the United States government to any protest?

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): The matter to which my hon. friend refers has been the subject of discussions between officials of the Department of Trade and Commerce and the representatives of the United States government. In the absence of the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) on other official duties today, I would not care to go beyond saying that. I prefer to leave it to him to say what can be said at this moment about those discussions.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

GENEVA CONFERENCE—REQUEST FOR FURTHER REPORT ON PROGRESS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Solon E. Low (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether it would be possible, before the session closes, for him, or his parliamentary assistant or some other member of the government, to make another report on the progress made at Geneva?

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if there is an opportunity and if any progress has been made at Geneva since my last statement, I am sure I shall be glad to report to the house on it.

SUPPLY

Hon. Douglas Abbott (Minister of Finance) moved that the house go into committee of supply.

SENATE REFORM

Hon. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I confess that I could not hear whether or not the motion has been put. I rise to follow the customary practice of availing myself at this time of the opportunity to deal with a subject which has been before this house on many earlier occasions.

I propose to move an amendment, and may I say that it is in a form which will not be open to the objection that it proposes the setting up of a committee which could not complete its task before the house rises. It is also not open to the objection that we seek to tie the hands of the government with regard to procedure in relation to something

which the party from which it is formed has been advocating for a great many years. I refer to the subject of Senate reform.

This is a subject that has been discussed on so many occasions that there is little need to argue for the purpose of convincing hon. members of this house that action is long overdue. I would point out, however, that for some time—in fact, for a long time—before this present government came to power, it was the declared intention of the party to which the members of this government and its supporters adhere to bring about a reform of the other house which would make it an effective part of our bicameral parliamentary system. When our parliamentary system was established the purpose of the Senate at that time was well defined. I need not repeat the various arguments that were presented on that occasion. They are before the members of this house. Obviously I need not argue to convince the members of the government or the supporters of the government that Senate reform is needed, because members of the government have for years been arguing in support of that proposition.

The predecessor of the present Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) as leader of the party to which he belonged had pledged on many occasions that Senate reform would be one of the important acts which he would undertake. An indication of the fact that this was constantly before the minds of the government, both during the time that it was headed by the late Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King as well as when headed by the Prime Minister, is to be found in the pages of *Hansard* and in a tremendous number of speeches outside the house. In fact there was a time when Senate reform seemed to be the main plank in the platform of the party which was then led by Mr. King. As an example of the various aspects of this problem which have come before the house, I refer to *Hansard* for 1926-27, volume 1, page 355. There I find the following under the heading "Senate reform":

Mr. Evans:

1. What is the form or wording of the pledge, if any, taken from those who have been appointed senators during the last two years with a view to Senate reform?

2. How many have been thus pledged?

Right Hon. Mr. Mackenzie King:

1. An assurance of support of such measure of Senate reform, in conformity with the requirements of the constitution, as may be introduced by the Liberal administration.

2. This assurance has been given by all who have accepted appointment to the Senate within the time mentioned.

By this question and answer it will be seen that so important was the subject in the mind of Mr. King that he followed the very