

Canada it is in the way our Senate is formed.

The hon. member for Welland has gone back to the origin of Confederation. It is within the knowledge of everybody that from the very day our constitution was adopted, the form of the Senate has been the subject of criticism. If I may be permitted to make a personal confession, I might refer to the fact that the Liberal Convention which met in this city in 1893, suggested the reform of the Senate as one of the reforms to be carried out. When the Liberal party came into office this subject was prominently before it. The Convention, however, had not gone further than to suggest a reform of the Senate—it had not said what that reform should be; and when we came into office it was difficult to get Parliament to agree to this or that reform. The Committee, if appointed would have to decide whether to recommend the continuance of the present system of appointment by the Crown—with any modifications that they might think best—or whether we should adopt the method of electing members to the Senate. When Confederation was under consideration, the legislature of the two Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada had a second chamber which was elective. The Convention which was held in 1864, had to consider whether there should be a second chamber or only one. The unanimous opinion was that, especially as a federal system was to be adopted, a second chamber was indispensable. The question then was whether it should be an elective chamber or one nominated by the Crown. As the hon. member for Welland has said, when Upper and Lower Canada were joined in 1841, the second chamber was made up of members nominated by the Crown, but this had not been satisfactory, and was changed in 1854, and then followed elections in 1856, 1858, and so on, as the hon. member has stated. I cannot agree with the hon. member for Welland, for I think that the elective system adopted in 1854, brought to the House a very high class of intellect indeed. Among those who were elected to this Legislative Council from the Province of Upper Canada were Mr. Vankoughnet, Mr. Christie, Mr. Macpherson, and I think Mr. Aikins, father of the present Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba. Among those brought to the Chamber from Lower Canada were Sir Etienne Paschal Taché, Mr. Dessaulles, and Mr. Lacoste, with quite a number of other of similar high standing in the community.

In 1864, however, when the convention sat in Quebec to prepare for Confederation, we must remember that we were in the throes of the American Civil War, and there was an impression rather prevalent that democracy might not succeed, and that it might be just as well not to have an absolutely democratic Parliament, but to retain something of the more Conservative system of Europe and of Great Britain. The system adopted, whether it was wise or not, did not give full satisfaction. When the Liberal party came into office in 1896 we had that question before us and the difficulty that we had was to determine whether the elective or the nominative system was the better. I personally would have been in favour of the American system, which provided for the election of the Senate, not by the people, but by the legislatures. Under that system, extending over a period of seventy or eighty years, the American Senate was probably one of the most potent and able legislative bodies in the world. They had in it such men as Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Douglas and Chase, the very elite of all that was intellectual, dignified and able in the United States. But, whether right or wrong, the accusation was made afterwards that the Senate had deteriorated and had become an assembly of plutocrats. As a consequence the system has been abolished and now the senators are elected directly by the people. These views created their impression upon us and we did not do anything.

I am glad that this discussion has taken place and that it has been free from all party allusions. But I think we might say that the present system of appointment has given us a Canadian Senate of which we have no cause to be ashamed, whether on one side of the other. The appointments, on the whole, have been very creditable to both sides. The Government of Sir John Macdonald made some very good appointments, the late Government made some very good appointments, and the present Government have made some good appointments. They are not all equal; they cannot be all equal. As to the object which my hon. friend from Welland seeks to obtain—a non-partisan body—I quite agree with my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce that it is impossible to have a non-partisan body. It is not in accordance with our system of Government. Our Government is founded, and carried on, upon the party system and so long as we retain that system, and so long as we have a first and second chamber they must reflect the