

members may belong, would have the co-operation of this house. It is quite possible that if a Conservative government were to win the confidence of the House of Commons tomorrow some people here might think that government measures coming over for our consideration were not up to the standard of measures which used to come from the government when composed of Liberals; but I feel sure that the Senate would co-operate fully and treat every measure on its merits, as it has done in the past. During the last fifty years nearly every government has for most of its period of office had a majority against it in the Senate. Laurier had a majority against him here until almost 1912. Someone told me the other day—I think it was the senator from Sherbrooke (Hon. Mr. Howard)—that it was not so very long ago when Mr. King said, "With that appointment I shall for the first time have a majority of Liberals in the Senate." I believe that the leader of the house should not be fixed with responsibility of the government by whom he has been appointed and also have responsibility as a member of this house. I think the two functions should be separated.

Hon. Mr. Davies: May I ask the honourable gentleman a question? Does not the leader of the government in this chamber of necessity have to be a member of the cabinet? If he is not, how is he going to interpret the view of the government on legislation presented to this house? Further, is it likely that a leader appointed by this house would be acceptable to the Prime Minister?

Hon. Mr. Robertson: I again point out that the government of the day appoints its leader in the Senate to handle its legislation and get the estimates passed. It so happens that when a senator is appointed to represent the government in this house he simultaneously takes the position of leader of the Senate, by reason of there being no other leader. In this sense I refer to a majority leader, and I am not speaking disrespectfully of my honourable friend.

Hon. Mr. Farris: Is it not true that, if we chose to do so, we could now appoint a leader of the Senate, apart from the leader of the government?

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Certainly, it is true. I would remind honourable senators that when I considered speaking on this subject on a previous occasion, a senator counselled me not to bother. He said that my job was to get legislation passed and to get estimates voted with as little discussion in the house as possible, and that if I did this I was doing a good job. My view is that however good that may be for the government I represent,

it is not a healthy state of affairs for the Senate. We all know that when a club or organization is formed, it immediately elects a president, or leader, and he is continued in office at the discretion of the organization.

Hon. Mr. King: By the appointment of one leader it is assumed that this house is to be of one mind. That just does not happen here. If one leader is appointed, a second leader should also be appointed.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: I would suggest that the question of who is to present the legislation is a mere detail. I come back to the original conception that the Senate is to be an independent body; and as such, it seems to me, it is most elementary that it should have its own leader who would co-operate with the administration of the day. My view is that the members of this house should not be dependent upon having a leader sent to them, as though they were not capable of choosing one for themselves.

I must apologize to the house for having taken so much time, but I have said what I have because I am proud of this institution and think it can make a greater contribution to the people of Canada than it has made in the past. Honourable senators will, I trust, treat my remarks as merely opening the discussion. I hope that everyone will participate in it. Some may agree in whole or in part with what I have said, while others may disagree with me entirely. In any event, I reserve the right to change my mind on the subject after having heard the thoughts of my honourable friends.

Hon. John T. Haig: Honourable members, I do not intend to continue the debate tonight, but I would like to say a few words to avoid any misunderstanding. The remarks of the honourable leader have been most interesting.

Hon. Mr. Lambert: May I rise to a point of order? This motion has not as yet had a second.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: It has been seconded by the senator from Inkerman (Hon. Mr. Hugessen).

Hon. Mr. Haig: Since my appointment as leader on this side of the house in September, 1945, a most happy relationship has existed between the leader of the government and myself. Although on questions that come before us we disagree more often than we agree, I wish to say publicly that during all this time he has never misled me by anything he said, and I have tried to accord him the same consideration.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.