

Prime Minister the other day, and I am inclined to agree with Senator O'Leary that they leave something to be desired. I don't think that I should go quite as far as he did in the matter, but I am dubious about them. I don't think really that there is any reasonable ground for the Honourable Senator Grosart's suggestion that the provinces ought to have been consulted about these changes. There is certainly, to my mind, no question at all that legally, under the provisions of section 91, head (1), of the British North America Act the Parliament of Canada can do anything it likes to the Senate by an ordinary act of Parliament, just as easily as it can pass an amendment to the Criminal Code or a bill dealing with trademarks or whatever you like.

● (2100)

But I am uneasy about two features of this proposal. One is this business of the suspensive veto. I admit that when the Joint Committee on the Constitution made its recommendations on the subject of the Senate, I did not dissent from them and the suspensive veto is in there. But sometimes one reflects after the event and begins to wonder whether one's initial position was altogether well-founded, and I personally should like to see a very great deal of very careful thought given to this business of the suspensive veto and especially in the regard that Senator O'Leary noted. If we are to have this chamber abolished, it seems to me that it must be only after a very, very careful process and it must be perfectly evident that this is really the will of the country. Very rarely, indeed, in many years has a government in the other place enjoyed the support of half the electorate. I think the only two cases in which, since 1917, the government won more than half the popular vote were in 1940 and 1958. So that the mere fact that there may be a large majority over there carrying something through the house does not mean necessarily that the whole country wants it. It does seem to me quite possible that you might find the other place passing a measure for the abolition of the Senate and a frightful outcry against this measure in large parts of the country. Then I think we should be perfectly justified in saying, "We won't pass this thing until it has been made perfectly clear, perhaps by a general election, that this is the real desire of the country." This house took that position on the Borden Naval Aid Bill of 1913, and I think it was, in retrospect, amply justified in doing so. So I think that this business of the suspensive veto needs very careful consideration and I am not as ready to open my mouth, shut my eyes and swallow it as I was a year or so ago. There is something to be said for it, but there is also something to be said against it.

As for this proposal of a seven-year term, renewable, so to speak, on good behaviour, the difficulty is, who is to judge the good behaviour? The danger is that it would be the government of the day which would make the decision. I don't wish to be unduly cynical, but it seems to me that there would be a temptation for any government of either party to say, "Well, that man has been pretty obstreperous; he has been a nuisance, and we don't think he ought to be re-appointed." There might also be a tendency on the part of some honourable senators, especially those coming near the end of their seven-year term, to keep an eye cocked over their shoulder to see how what

[Senator Forsey.]

they said and did was going down with the powers that be in office at the time. Perhaps I should not be so suspicious, but I have been careful to say that I think that this might apply to governments of both parties and I think also to senators of both parties. I am afraid there is a certain human weakness in most of us, and it might be open to temptation, and therefore I am a little dubious about that particular proposal also.

I should have been much more happy about the suggestions for Senate reform if they had incorporated some of the other proposals which were in the report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Constitution, which would have added materially to the strength of this house and would not have been open to the kind of objections that this particular proposal is.

I don't know where it came from, and I don't know how seriously it is intended—it may be merely a kite that is being flown to test the wind—but I for one am prepared to look with a very critical eye at any proposal of this sort that comes before us, and I hope that nobody will accuse me, as I have occasionally been accused before by people in the party to my right, of being too eager to display my loyalty to the government. This is a subject on which I think we should all be prepared to show a good deal of independence of mind.

Now, finally—and honourable senators will be relieved to know that I am coming towards the end, although they may feel that I am like some of the old-fashioned preachers who said, "To conclude," and then, "In conclusion," and then, "Finally," and, "Now, my dear brethren, to say a last word," or something of that nature—finally, I want to touch on a subject of some delicacy and I hope that nobody will, at some point during my discussion, jump to the conclusion that he has heard the whole thing and start denouncing me as an arrant partisan or bigot on one side or the other.

The subject I refer to is the recent Quebec legislation known as Bill 22. I approach this with some diffidence partly because I have a foot in both camps, so to speak. As some honourable senators have heard me say before, I am a member and an officer in several capacities—an active member—of a French language United Church in which, I might add, I recently preached my twelfth French sermon. Protestant ministers of the French language are rather scarce and so when our minister goes on holiday the laity has to pitch in. So I think I have some feeling for French Canadians and French-Canadian opinion. On the other hand I am of almost purely English extraction, and I think I have some feeling the other way too, and I find that when I am discussing things of this sort with French Canadian friends I find myself, over and over again, saying, "Oui, oui, d'accord, mais . . .", and when I am discussing it with some of my English Canadian friends I say, "Yes, yes, I know, I see your point but at the same time I think you should allow for such and such; you must recognize that this is so; you must realize that French Canadians can't see the thing in that way; you must remember that they have certain claims that may be strange to you." So, I find myself doing a tightrope act, and I fear that before I have finished my discussion of this subject, not necessarily tonight, I shall be left almost without friends; I shall find myself in the same position as