

constitution of the Senate. The suggestion of election of senators doubtless has features to recommend it. The idea is not a new one. It has been tried in the United States, perhaps in some instances with success, but in many to the grievous disappointment of the best citizens of that country. It may matter little what is the form of constitution of a parliament, you may get good results from a parliament which, in theory, is improperly constituted, and vice versa. "What's best administered is best." I am rather inclined to the view of the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Turriff) at the moment, but am not inflexible in that view and would be quite willing to change it if reasons were given to prove that an elective Senate is the best. When a resolution on this subject was before this House in 1906 the present leader of the Opposition (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) quoted from Sir John Macdonald upon the subject of an elective Senate. I read what was then quoted, because it embodies a substantial objection that can be raised against the suggestion contained in the resolution. Sir John Macdonald said:—

The arguments for an elective council are numerous and strong; and I ought to say so, as one of the Administration responsible for introducing the elective principle into Canada. I hold that this principle has not been a failure in Canada, but there were causes—which we did not take into consideration at the time—why it did not so fully succeed in Canada as we had expected. One great cause was the enormous extent of constituencies and the immense labour which consequently devolved on those who sought the suffrages of the people for election to the council, for the same reason the expense, the legitimate expense, was so enormous that men of standing in the country, eminently fitted for such a position, were prevented from coming forward.

The latter part of the quotation I think, gives a fairly substantial objection to the principle of the resolution submitted by the hon. member for Welland. A senatorial election on the basis outlined in the resolution may incur a vast amount of legitimate expense and would consume a great deal of time, and I fear that the result would be that the proper class of men would not seek election to a Senate so constituted.

It will be unfortunate if this debate should end without further action taken, as occurred in the case of other similar resolutions. I think the opinion that there is room for reform in the constitution of the Senate is as strong upon one side of this House as upon the other. This is a question on which, I think, we might well

forget for the moment our political feelings, the Government might forget that they are in power, and that members might join together candidly and regardless of political feelings, with the hope of working out some solution of this problem. I would suggest that a committee of the House be appointed to consider the resolution, and I would give power to that committee to send for witnesses and for any documents which may be available and helpful. The matter being taken up by this committee, I should hope that the interest in it would be continued after the conclusion of this debate. A number of members of the House, and a number of senators also, might be summoned before the committee, and probably their opinions would be given to the committee with greater alacrity than they would be given in the House. I am not sure that the committee should not be composed of members of the Senate as well as of members of this House. I submit my amendment. It embodies the view I hold, and if not absolutely correct in form, it can be amended later:

That a select committee of seven members of the House of Commons be appointed to take into consideration notice of motion No. 16 on the notice paper, standing in the name of Mr. German and relating to the constitution of the Senate, with power to send for persons, papers and documents and to report from time to time.

Mr. W. F. NICKLE (Kingston): Mr. Speaker, when I came to the House this afternoon, I was not aware that this resolution was to be debated and, therefore, I have not got my thoughts in such order as I might desire. But, Sir, the question of the constitution of the Canadian Senate is one that has for many years more or less had my attention. I realize that in drawing constitutions one may plan ever so carefully and that in the actual working out of the scheme what was desired is not always attained. One of the most glaring examples, I suppose, in history, is the effort of the founders of the American Constitution in determining the methods that were to be adopted in the election of the president. They established it as a principle that the Electoral College should be chosen. They, no doubt, expected that it would be composed of the ablest and most far-sighted men of the time, that they would gather together at stated periods and that their combined wisdom would result in the most suitable man in the United States being chosen as president. But, if that was what they expected they signally failed in attain-