

upon the public acts which come before them. It was recognized, apparently, in most of the debates on the subject which took place in this House, that senators were all party men—that, whatever the mode of their appointment was, they would meet in the second chamber as men affiliated with one of the two parties in Canada. It also seemed to be generally desired by those who took part in those debates that some mode of appointment should be devised under which it would not be possible for a Government perpetuating itself in power to wipe out all opposition, by preventing the appointment of representatives holding views somewhat different from those of the Ministerial party. The problem was to devise a mode of appointment which would provide a more even balance between the two parties in this Chamber, in order to enable the more independent minds, or those less subservient to party feeling, to have full play in the decisions of this body.

In the debates of 1906-7 or 1907-8, I suggested that perhaps the following modification in the appointment of senators could be adopted with advantage to this Chamber. My suggestion was that senators should be appointed, not by the Cabinet, but by the House of Commons, which would naturally give a preponderating influence to the Cabinet, since it would enjoy the confidence of a majority of the House of Commons. When a party on coming into power, found itself with a minority in this Chamber, it could, through its majority in the House of Commons appoint senators to vacancies as they occur—until it had attained a certain given majority, say five or ten. When that majority was reached, the appointments should be made alternately, one by the majority of the House of Commons, and one by the leader of the Opposition, whose candidate would be the one obtaining the greatest number of votes from the members of the Opposition. I thought that this would perhaps give the Senate a greater influence with the public at large, inasmuch as it would put the two parties in this Chamber somewhat on a parity, the Ministerial party always having a slight majority for the reasons that I have given. Of course, many and diverse opinions were expressed by the various members of this Chamber; but I thought that, until the people of Canada should decide on some form of direct election of senators, that mode of appointment would result in maintaining a fairly equal division between the two parties, and in giving to the more independent members a larger influence in the decision of the important questions that come before us.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND.

I recall this expression of opinion of ten years ago because at the present moment the two parties have almost reached that ideal condition which I have mentioned, in which the party in power has a small majority in this Chamber; and for the better administration of the affairs of Parliament it should be satisfied with a small margin, rather than an overwhelming majority. I recall it also because we are in a transitory stage—the Parliament elected in 1911 having practically expired last autumn, and because the two parties to-day are continuing, of their own volition, to perpetuate themselves in Parliament without going back to the electors for a new mandate. I mention it because it seems to me appropriate at this particular time. If the leaders of the two parties feel that there is a public advantage in maintaining a certain equilibrium in this Chamber, now is the time, before an election, in the peculiar conditions which exist, to decide upon a new policy. To my mind this is one of those exceptional occasions when the two parties, in face of a dissolution of the House of Commons, standing practically on an equal footing, can decide upon a new policy. I mention it now because I feel that at such a time the two parties are entitled to claim an even division of public opinion in this country. Of course, only an election will tell, but, for that reason, I thought it proper that I should recall the remarks that I formerly made. We had those debates in this Chamber without consideration of party advantage. We were discussing in absolute sincerity what would be the best solution for the criticism that we sometimes hear in the country as to the mode of appointment to this Chamber.

Hon. Mr. DAVID: Would not those members appointed by the House of Commons be themselves members of the House of Commons, or would they be taken from outside?

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I do not remember touching upon that point, but I should take it for granted that the Government of the day, or the leader of the Opposition, might make the selection and nomination of a senator even from among their colleagues. I admit that there are arguments pro and con, and I have not applied my mind to the solution of that question.

Hon. Mr. CLOBAN: Will the hon. senator who has just taken his seat allow me to put to him a question in regard to his remarks as to the majority in the Senate? What difference does it make—