

I knew Senators Grant and Tremblay in the House of Commons for quite a number of years before they were appointed to the Senate, and I am well aware of the contributions they made. I knew Senator Robertson from his having been Leader of the Government and also Speaker in the Senate. We in the Maritime provinces were proud that Senator Robertson had contributed so much and had attained the distinction of being appointed to the two highest offices in the Senate.

I must also say that on this side of the house we very much miss Senator Buchanan who has also resigned. He is one of the most lovable men I have ever met. Despite the fact that he had a serious illness shortly after he was appointed to the Senate he always met you with a smile and worked to the capacity which his illness would allow. He was always in his seat, both here in the chamber and on the committees of which he was a member.

These senators contributed greatly not only to the deliberations of the Senate but also to the public life of the country, and it is appropriate, honourable senators, that men such as these who have served Canada so well, and for whom the time has come to retire because of ill health, can do so voluntarily with grace and with dignity.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Brooks: But I wish to emphasize the word "voluntarily," because while such men retire voluntarily, that privilege is denied many other senators, unless they conform to certain sections of the new Retirement of Senators Act.

Speaking personally—that is, expressing my own opinion—I believe that the Retirement of Senators Act should be amended so that those who were appointed for life are not compelled to resign at age 75 or lose the pension for themselves or their widow. I believe that is the correct interpretation of the act. I think the act is unfair and poor in that respect, and that some effort should be made to have that section amended.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Brooks: I have nothing to add regarding that matter.

Honourable senators, we had a long recess of seven months. I suppose it is the longest recess that Parliament has had in a great many years. I cannot remember recessing for as long as seven months at any other time.

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: Not since the thirties.

Hon. Mr. Brooks: I was not here then having entered Parliament in 1935; but there was not so much parliamentary business in the thirties.

The only interesting feature of the long recess was the election and, as we have heard on all sides and many times, it accomplished nothing. It was time wasted, and now we are back where we were seven months ago, with a tremendous backlog of business that should have been attended to long ago.

I do not think it out of place here to say that I believe the Prime Minister was very poorly advised. I know that many people were greatly annoyed and thought that instead of taking advice from the sources he did—sources which had given him very poor advice on previous occasions—he should have used his own judgment, and the country and Parliament would have been much better off.

We have started a new session, and I hope it will not be like the last two sessions. Over the past two years important business was held up. Many items mentioned in previous Throne speeches were not proceeded with. In my opinion the two previous sessions of Parliament dealt mostly with contentious matters that tended to provoke disunity in this country; matters that could very well have been dealt with at some future time. This is not a time for governments, and especially minority governments, to concern themselves with matters of a contentious nature. They do not have a mandate from the people to do so.

A moment ago I mentioned the fact that we have many problems to solve. Naturally, some are more important than others. From reading the press, the speeches of the provincial premiers and of our own colleagues here and in the House of Commons, it seems to me that we are becoming very familiar with the word "priority." Our leaders, both provincial and federal, realize that in legislation we must deal with first things first. I was very much impressed by the remarks made by Premier Duff Roblin of the province of Manitoba to the other premiers attending the recent Federal-Provincial Conference. He said that in his opinion priorities of legislation should be selected by the premiers of the provinces and representatives of the federal Government, so that we could deal first with the things that are needed most and those we can pay for.

In the so-called Deutsch Report, which I am sure all honourable senators have read, priorities are stressed. It emphasizes the fact