

Canada alone of great federal countries has unfortunately adopted a nominative system which gives it a weak Senate and deprives it of the real upper House which if it had liked it might have had.

The hon. gentleman from Acadie (Hon. Mr. Poirier) referred to the fact that some years ago he introduced a resolution discussing the whole question. The other day he submitted to the House some views which he entertained providing for a system of representation by nationalities, and I think the hon. gentleman's system would not be a good one. I regard it as undesirable. And while we must give him credit for his desire to do the best he can in his view of the matter, yet what we need is a greater unity of the nationalities within the confederation rather than by dividing them. Appointed as the Senate is by the government of the day no doubt many things will influence the appointments. I say this with regard to both parties. In the discussion in the Lower House the other day, the Premier admitted his own weakness in the matter. He could not go outside the party lines in making appointments, although willing apparently to do so if he could. The desire to get a man out of the way, to secure a man of a certain religion, to give representation to a particular place, may easily influence appointments, and men will naturally yield to influences of this kind. I can say as a member of the Senate—and I should like these observations to go to the country—I am not conscious of any direct influence on the part of the government to induce me to cast my vote one way or the other, but it is natural for a man to vote with his party. We are under a system of party government, and it is exceedingly hard work for an hon. gentleman to divest himself of the idea that the party to which he has attached himself is not the best party, and that the views of his party are quite correct; and if, in the exercise of his judgment, he is led away from that view, he still has the feeling that his own judgment may not be so good as the judgment of his party, and he is very apt, I think, to yield somewhat when he would not do so otherwise. I do not think, however, that that is a matter for which the government itself is to blame, but I do think that probably the system may have

something to do with it. In this connection I desire to call the attention of the House to some observations somewhat along that line made by the hon. gentleman from Marshfield in the discussion of the question; and I should like to say that if the leader of the opposition had the right to appoint members of the Senate they would be influenced just in the same way. If there be a wrong influence; if a man's freedom or desire to follow certain lines is affected in any way by the mode in which he is appointed by the government, a man appointed by the hon. leader of the opposition would be in the same position. It does not follow that the government is wrong all the time, but the reasons which would induce a man who is appointed by the government to vote with the government would just as readily induce a man appointed by the hon. leader of the opposition to follow the same example, and vote with his party.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—That is the admirable feature of my suggestion; both sides would be represented.

Hon. Mr. ELLIS—I answer that suggestion, and say that it is not numbers so much that count. But the hon. gentleman in his review of what the Senate had done, said:

Up to this time, there has been very slight indication of independence among the supporters of the government in this House with regard to government measures. Of course you will tell me that this is only four or five years, but many of us think that there were instances in that period in which the supporters of the government might have found occasion to have asserted their independence.

These facts go to show that British parliamentary institutions have been carried out with a great deal of success, and in a very harmonious manner in the working of our institutions in Canada. Indeed, if there is any fault at all to be found with the record of the Senate in all the different periods I have referred to, it is that the Senate has been too acquiescent. I have no hesitation in looking back over the events which have occurred between 1878 and 1896—although I was in the Senate a part of that time myself—in saying that the Senate would have done itself justice if more criticism and independence had been evinced during that time, that it would have been better for Canada and it would have given the Senate a better record.

I think the verdict of history will be that the Senate has been on the whole rather too acquiescent in assenting to measures passed by the House of Commons, and I would utter a warning to hon. gentlemen sitting opposite me and to hon. gentlemen around me as well, and that is this: During the long period that