

contagious diseases from which we periodically suffer. I am convinced that if the commission, which has charge of the protection and safeguarding of the international waterways, was requested to take this matter in hand, a solution would be found equitable and salutary for the United States as well as for Canada.

There is another question not mentioned in the speech from the Throne, on which, if I am allowed, I would like to say a word. I would not dare raise the question, if it were not the subject of almost constant discussion in the press and elsewhere, and if, during each session, the discussion of this question were not imposed upon us in this House and elsewhere: I mean the question generally known as 'The reform of the Senate.' For a number of years this honourable House itself has been stirred by this persistent controversy, and has itself discussed at a certain length what was meant thereby and what would be the best thing to do in connection therewith. I have up to now been careful not to take part in the discussion, because as a new comer here I felt that I did not possess the required knowledge of parliamentary procedure as it applies more especially to the Senate. Moreover, I thought it was wise and prudent to allow the old and experienced members to express their opinions before expressing my own. I would request however, that I should to-day be permitted to offer my appreciation on this grave and important question so persistently discussed, so continuously raised, and to which some day, sooner or later, a solution must be found. I believe that to this House especially falls the duty of considering and discussing the question, and that it is in this House that the solution of the difficulty will be the more readily found. I hasten to state that, in my mind the words 'Reform of the Senate' are not exact. I do not believe that the Senate, as it is constituted to-day, needs reform; I believe, on the contrary, that the Senate as it is constituted to-day, contains a selection of men as qualified and as representative as it is possible to find for the working of parliamentary mechanism,

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT.

and if to-morrow if the present senators had to be replaced, I do not think it would be possible to make a selection of men more competent than those who occupy the senatorial seats to-day. It is not so much the Senate itself which it would be wise and prudent to alter, but the method or mode of selecting the senators. I have no hesitation in saying that, for my part, after having given the subject my best and constant attention, the Senate will never be what it ought to be; that it will never exercise the influence and authority it ought to exercise, so long as the senators are chosen as they are to-day. Direct election by the people is the principle which ought to be substituted for the present method. With institutions as essentially democratic as ours, a Senate chosen by the executive and appointed for life, seems to me an anachronism. I do not pretend to submit to-day or even later a detailed plan of the manner in which these elections could or should be made; I simply desire to be permitted to-day to express my personal opinion, that the solution of the difficulty is to be found in a mode of direct election by the people; and I would wish that—following the example of the House of Lords, which, at this moment, has taken in its own hands the task of conforming to public opinion in England—our Senate would deal with and decide for itself the question which it has been agreed to call the reform of the Senate.

In concluding, I regret having tried your patience, hon. gentlemen, especially after my promise, at the start, of being brief in my remarks, and I join with His Excellency the Governor General in asking and in praying for the blessings of Providence on our labours and on our country, that it may continue to progress and prosper. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion of my hon. friend representing the division of Halifax, that a humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General, praying His Excellency to accept our thanks for the speech he has been kind enough to address to us at the opening of the present session.