

the House will take this matter into his consideration.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN (Halifax): I did not intend addressing the House on this resolution, but since hearing the hon. member for Welland I have a little more interest in the matter than I had thought I would have. I can well appreciate the befitting modesty of my hon. friend for Welland and his diffidence in moving this resolution by reason of the fact that resolutions of this character are largely academic and usually are made by members of the Opposition. Resolutions of this character as a rule receive but scant sympathy from the Government of the day. I remember in 1907 when a resolution for the reform of the Senate was moved by the late Mr. MacIntyre, the present Prime Minister, then leader of the Opposition, expressed the opinion that some reform was desirable, but that it was entirely in the hands of the Government. If that was true then, I suppose we upon this side of the House might to-day well urge that reform of the Senate is to some degree at least desirable, and that the power to reform that body is within the hands of the Government, and therefore they should take some action. However, that form of discussion does not carry one very far, and is not very likely to bring about reform.

I do not know whether I can fully endorse the resolution of the hon. member for Welland, but I am strongly of the opinion that there is great urgency for some reform in the constitution of the Senate. No doubt that body was patterned after the British House of Lords. Of course, we could not very well adopt the hereditary principle here, and it is very fortunate that we did not, but in my opinion appointments to the Senate for life are but little better than the hereditary principle which prevails in respect to the British House of Lords. I hope that one of the great reforms that will take place in England in consequence of this war will be the abolition of the hereditary principle in the House of Lords, which, after all, is but a relic of mediævalism, and does not tend to keep the British democracy in the position it should occupy.

I quite agree with the mover and seconder of the resolution in refraining from any attack on the personnel of the Senate, a course which has been very often departed from in this House in debating similar resolutions. It is quite true that the Senate has not accomplished that measure of use-

[Mr. Turriff.]

fulness which the founders of Canada expected of it; nevertheless, the members of the Senate have been eminently respectable and able men, always desirous of performing their public duties. The mover of the resolution has referred to three or four measures which have been defeated by the Senate.

I cannot at the moment say, nor would I care to speculate upon, what were the motives of the members of that body in defeating any of the measures to which the hon. member has referred. But I believe that in each case the Senate probably reflected public opinion. Looking backward upon the defeat of the Yukon Railway Bill—I was not in the House at that time—I am inclined to believe that it was probably in the interest of Canada. Perhaps it is easier to see that to-day than at the time the Bill was defeated. And it is quite possible that the motive impelling the Senate in its action was political. I think also that the defeat of the Naval Bill would have been endorsed by the public if the matter had been properly presented to them and time had been afforded for reflection. The Senate did not defeat the Highways Bill, but merely insisted upon an amendment which the Government did not accept. I have never had any doubt as to the propriety of the Senate defeating that Bill absolutely, for every measure involving the expenditure of public money should have behind it some policy, and this was a Bill without any public policy behind it. Only recently we had the defeat of a Bill for the relief of the shareholders of a defunct bank, the Farmers' Bank, a Bill in which I think you, Mr. Speaker (Mr. Blain in the Chair) were actively interested. That Bill was defeated by vote of the Senate, the majority including many of those affiliated with the Conservative party. I think this was one instance in which the majority of the Senate defeated a Bill which they believed to be wrong in principle, and in defeating it were not influenced by political considerations.

There is one feature in the constitution of the Senate which I do not hesitate to condemn, and that is the life tenure of office by senators. I do not believe there is in this Chamber to-day a single member, who, expressing his honest conviction, would say that he approves of that feature of the constitution of the Senate. The abolition of the life tenure would be in itself a very considerable reform, and would bring about so many advantages that there would be less necessity for radical changes in the