

THE SENATE

Thursday, February 17, 1949

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK BILL

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

Hon. Mr. Copp presented the report of the Standing Committee on Banking and Commerce on Bill K, an Act to amend the Industrial Development Bank Act.

He said: Honourable senators, the committee have, in obedience to the order of reference of February 14, 1949, examined the said bill, and now beg leave to report the same without any amendment.

THIRD READING

The Hon. the Speaker: When shall this bill be read the third time?

Hon. Mr. Robertson: With leave of the Senate, I move the third reading of the bill.

The motion was agreed to and the bill was read the third time, and passed.

PRIVATE BILL

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

Hon. Mr. Copp presented the report of the Standing Committee on Banking and Commerce on Bill I, an Act to incorporate Canadian Home Assurance Company.

He said: Honourable senators, the committee have, in obedience to the order of reference of February 10, 1949, examined the said bill, and now beg leave to report the same without any amendment.

THIRD READING

The Hon. the Speaker: When shall this bill be read the third time?

Hon. Mr. Copp: With leave, I move the third reading now.

The motion was agreed to, and the bill was read the third time, and passed.

PRIVATE BILL

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

Hon. Mr. Copp presented the report of the Standing Committee on Banking and Commerce on Bill L, an Act respecting the Corporation of the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Transportation Commission and the Ottawa Electric Railway Company.

He said: Honourable senators, the committee have, in obedience to the order of reference of February 16, 1949, examined the said bill, and now beg to report the same without any amendment.

THIRD READING

The Hon. the Speaker: When shall this bill be read the third time?

Hon. Mr. Robertson: With leave of the Senate, now.

The motion was agreed to, and the bill was read the third time, and passed.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Honourable senators, I should like to discuss the order of business for this afternoon, and at the same time acquaint honourable senators with the program which I have in mind for the next two weeks.

First, as to the order of business, I would ask that Motion No. 2, when it is called, stand until later in the sitting, so that I may proceed to close the debate on Bill 11, an Act to approve the Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada. Then, if the house gives second reading to this bill, I would ask that we revert to the motion. I may say that if the legislation respecting Newfoundland is passed today, it is intended that it shall receive Royal Assent tomorrow afternoon at approximately six o'clock, when I hope there will be a good representation in the chamber.

I have given careful consideration to the question of what business is likely to come before the Senate in the next two weeks, and, as far as I can ascertain, there seems to be no good reason for honourable members to meet during that period. I have never hesitated to ask the Senate to sit whenever it has had a reasonable amount of business to attend to, and honourable members have always cheerfully and willingly agreed. But as I see no public interest that would suffer by reason of a recess, when the house adjourns tomorrow evening I shall move that it stand adjourned until Tuesday, March 8, at 8 p.m.

Before the Senate takes an adjournment, it is customary to move a motion authorizing His Honour the Speaker to recall honourable members in the remote event that unforeseen circumstances should make it necessary for the Senate to resume before the date fixed for the end of the adjournment. I therefore give notice now that tomorrow I shall move:

That for the duration of the present session of Parliament, should an emergency arise during any adjournment of the Senate, which would in the opinion of the Honourable the Speaker warrant that the Senate meet prior to the time set forth in the motion for such adjournment, the Honourable the

Speaker be authorized to notify honourable senators at their addresses as registered with the Clerk of the Senate to meet at a time earlier than than set out in the motion for such adjournment, and non-receipt by any one or more honourable senators of such call shall not have any effect upon the sufficiency and validity thereof.

Hon. John T. Haig: Honourable senators, I heartily agree with the suggestion that motion No. 2 stand over until item No. 1 on the Order Paper has been considered.

This gives me an opportunity to say something that I have been wanting to say. I think that the next time our rules are amended there should be inserted a provision, such as is to be found in the rules of most legislatures, so far as my experience goes, that certain days of the week—say Monday, Wednesday and Friday—are government days, and the remaining days are private members' days. On government days the honourable leader of the house could call for consideration of any government item on the Order Paper that he wished to advance, but on the other days private members' legislation would take precedence. I think that would be of great advantage, not only to the government but to private members. As we know, it frequently happens that government legislation, or the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne or something of that kind, is discussed day after day until perhaps a quarter to six, when a few minutes are devoted to some private bill. We none of us like to suggest that a bill sponsored by a private member should be held over for another day, yet in these circumstances we sometimes feel that a private bill does not receive the consideration it deserves.

As to the proposed adjournment, I was secretly hoping that it would be until the 14th of March. I am not criticizing the leader of the government at all, for I know that before making his announcement he has been in consultation with the Prime Minister. I am afraid, though, that the Prime Minister is unduly optimistic in thinking that much legislation will be put through the other house in the next two or three weeks. There being a possibility of an election within the next fifteen months, and human nature being what it is, many honourable members of the other house will wish to make speeches designed to influence their constituents. I am doubtful that much legislation will come over to us from the other place within the next two weeks. However, it is our duty and responsibility to be here on the date fixed for resuming, and we shall discharge that responsibility.

I for one have long felt that we would be much better liked by the public if we did five solid days of work every week for two or three weeks and then took a couple of weeks recess, instead of meeting for an hour or an

hour and a half daily for three days a week, which seems like puttering around. I wish to repeat that I am not criticizing the leader of the government. On the contrary, I entirely endorse what he is doing. He was kind enough to let me know what he intended to propose to the house, and I appreciate his courtesies.

NEWFOUNDLAND-CANADA UNION BILL

SECOND READING

The Senate resumed from yesterday, the adjourned debate on the motion of Hon. Mr. Copp for the second reading of Bill 11, an Act to approve the Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada.

Hon. Wishart McL. Robertson: Honourable senators, although circumstances beyond my control made it impossible for me to present this measure for your consideration, I am grateful that I have the opportunity of closing the debate. I have read with the greatest interest the discussion which has taken place in this chamber, and wish to join with those who have spoken in extending to the people of Newfoundland the warmest welcome to the confederation of Canada.

The speeches which have been made, honourable senators, are of the quality one would reasonably expect, having regard to the talent which exists among the members of this chamber and the very great occasion upon which they were exercised. The speeches were so uniformly good that it is difficult to select any particular one for comment. However, perhaps I will be pardoned by the other speakers if I say that while reading the address of the honourable senator for Vancouver (Hon. Mr. Farris) I was reminded of his remarks to me during the early sittings of the first committee appointed by the Canadian Government to negotiate with the first committee from Newfoundland. In private conversation with my honourable friend I had occasion to comment on matters generally in relation to Newfoundland, and made the observation that the proposed union would entail a very substantial financial obligation on the part of Canada. The honourable gentleman replied: "Of course the financial responsibility is always an important question, especially if it assumes unreasonable proportions. That is one thing. But my warning to you and to the government is that if you lose this opportunity for union between Canada and Newfoundland, the people of this country will hold you strictly responsible. If you have any objection to union on financial grounds, it must be exceedingly strong to satisfy the people of Canada, should union fail." I felt that the whole tone of my friend's speech reflected consistency in that regard.