

Newfoundland

Mr. St. Laurent: I submit not, Mr. Chairman—any more than it was necessary to amend the British North America Act for the purpose of giving legal effect to the return of the natural resources to the western provinces. It was not done in the form provided by the British North America Act, but it was confirmed by the parliament that passed the British North America Act and made effective notwithstanding anything to the contrary. In the *Votes and Proceedings* tomorrow the hon. member will probably find the form of address which it is proposed to ask the houses of parliament to adopt. I think he will find the matter is properly taken care of in that form of address.

Mr. Fleming: I appreciate the point the Prime Minister has raised in his answer, but I am also not unmindful of the fact we wait very long sometimes for the holding of by-elections. I recall very well that two years ago, owing to inclement weather, we were told, the by-election in the riding of Halifax was delayed for seven or eight months. In view of the circumstances under which these vacancies will exist, presumably on the first day of April, would it not be very simple for the Prime Minister to assure the house that steps will be taken immediately to see that the writs are issued and everything possible is done to expedite the filling of the vacancies in the Newfoundland seats in this house.

Mr. St. Laurent: The only assurance I can give the hon. member is that we will attempt to discharge our responsibilities in that regard in such a manner as will satisfy both the house and the Canadian public.

Mr. Case: I should like to make this observation. It has been some time since the dominion of Newfoundland has had an election. Clause 4 provides for the election of seven members. I think it can be reasonably assumed that the people, given that opportunity of expressing themselves, may or may not elect all of one party on certain conditions or matters of policy.

I notice provision is made for the appointment of six members to the Senate. I do not know what practice was followed by the fathers of confederation when the upper chamber was created. Appointments were made from Ontario, from Quebec and from the other provinces which entered into the union. I may now be trying to pry into an internal secret, but it would be interesting if the government would disclose how generous they might be in seeing to it that, not only the government, but His Majesty's loyal opposition would be represented in the Senate. I can understand how these appointments are made at a later stage; but when a

province is coming in and there are these appointments to be made, it would seem reasonable to think that some recognition should be given to the minority who have never had an opportunity of electing any part of the federal government of the Dominion of Canada. If I am not presuming too much, and the Prime Minister would care to make an observation, I am sure I would appreciate it very much.

Mr. St. Laurent: All I can say is that we are endeavouring to obtain the best possible information concerning what would be apt to make the people of Newfoundland feel they had chosen wisely in joining confederation. So far, the only specific recommendation we have had is that, because of the general mentality of the people of Newfoundland, it would be wise if it were possible to have two of the six senators chosen from the Anglican denomination which represents about a third of the population.

Mr. MacNicol: From what group?

Mr. St. Laurent: Two chosen from members of the Anglican denomination; two chosen from the Roman Catholic denomination and two chosen from the United church or other denominations which make up the remainder of the population.

I inquired how soon after the entry of Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Manitoba and the setting-up of Alberta and Saskatchewan appointments had been made to the Senate. To my surprise I was informed it was about five months. I am not sure whether there was one earlier than that, but I believe the earliest were made around the five-month period, and in some cases it was much longer than five months. I was surprised to find that so long a time had been found necessary to deal with these vacancies. This point was discussed with those from whom we were seeking to be enlightened about the situation in Newfoundland. We were told it would be unwise to proceed otherwise than by threes, if we could not make six appointments. If we made the six appointments, it would be all right provided they were distributed according to religious denominations, as I have described. But if we did not do that we should make at least three appointments at a time, because it would be unsatisfactory if any one of these three groups was preferred to the other two. We were told we should be careful to avoid offending the susceptibilities of these three separate religious groups in the island.

Mr. Stephenson: I should like to ask the Prime Minister one question. He has mentioned that two members of various religious denominations might be appointed, but is it not possible for them to be all of the Liberal faith?

[Mr. Jaenicke.]