

# THIS WEEK AND NEXT

by Ray Argyle



## Shh... Senate Asleep!

The Senate — that "assembly of old men" as the Romans called it — contained some younger faces at Ottawa this week. But the reputation of Canada's upper chamber was, if anything, the worse because of it.

Prime Minister Pearson's appointment of 10 new members stressed anew the dismal trap which waits for those who yearn to reform the Senate.

The PM's action in naming nine well-known Liberal workers among his 10 appointees shocked the country because Mr. Pearson had in the past made so many promises about Senate reform.

The Liberal Party's 1963 platform contained a firm pledge to reorganize the upper house. That was the election which first put Mr. Pearson into the office. When he went back to the country last November, that plank was strangely missing from the Liberal campaign platform.

The Liberal Government did succeed in one minor bit of Senate reform — the compulsory retirement at the age of 75 of those appointed since last May.

Senators who were appointed before last May — when the retirement bill was passed — are also eligible to step down at 75, on a pension of \$8,000 per year. The first to do so was Alberta's J. W. Stambaugh.

Canada's 102 Senators are now appointed to the age of 75 at \$15,000 per year, of which \$3,000 is tax free.

As everyone knows, the Senate was designed after the pattern of Britain's House of Lords, the theory being that in Canada as well as Britain there was a need for a non-elective body which could take a sober second look at House of Commons legislations.

Bills do not become law until they clear the Senate, but in recent years in both Canada and Britain the voice of the House has been so strong that the upper chamber has not dared prevent passage.

Because Senators need not obligate themselves to the voters, they would save the country from radical legislation. This

was the historic reasoning behind the acceptance by the Fathers of Confederation of the idea of a two-chamber parliament.

While the Senate was established in the tradition of the House of Lords, it has in fact worked out very differently than its British counterpart.

In Canada, the Senate became quickly and totally a tool of political patronage, an old man's home for unsuccessful politicians, with little to contribute to the country. With appointments under full control of the government, no independent or "third party" spokesmen have ever gained entrance.

But in Britain, drastic changes in the membership of the House of Lords have come about in recent years. Because the Labor party had its turn at government and in recommending the creation of peerages, radical new blood streamed into the House of Lords.

More recently, the creation of lifetime peerages (in which only the recipients and not their descendants would be eligible to sit in the House of Lords) opened up the old institution to many more ex-commoners. Legislation permitting members of the House of Lords to resign if they wished to seek election to the House of Commons finally democratized the system.

The result has been that in Britain the House of Lords, because of the quality of its membership, has become a leader of public opinion. It has spearheaded new legislation, such as the abolition of capital punishment and the legalization of homosexual acts between consenting adults.

The inference must be that it is not the system so much that is at fault as the kind of people who run the system. As long as the Canadian Senate remains a haven for unsuccessful politicians — and the ability to lose elections was the chief claim to distinction of nine of the 10 latest appointments — the Senate will continue to be a pimple on the body politic.

Toronto Telegram News Service

**BANTAMS** - Continued from page 4  
North Shore Championship. From latest reports, Wawa has won the North Shore championship by defeating Geraldton in both games.

### FOUR NEW BOOKS AT YOUR LIBRARY

- In Cold Blood - by Truman Capote
- The Courage of the Early Morning - Billy Bishop
- The Green Berets by Robin Moore
- West Viking - by Farley Mowatt.

The latter book is a highly original and convincing reconstruction of 10th century Norse voyages of exploration and piracy which resulted in the settlement of Greenland and the discovery of North America. Inevitably Mowatt's material is controversial since in them certain theories have been advanced regarding the location of Leif Ericson's Vinland The Good, to name only one example.

Would the subscribers with overdue books kindly return them to the library.



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