

# 84-year-old Liberal Senator is busiest on Parliament Hill

By BEN WARD  
**J**YTTAWA (CP)—One of the busiest men on Parliament Hill is an 84-year-old Liberal senator who keeps three careers going and doesn't intend to retire from any of them "until I get old."

Arthur Wentworth Roebuck is a complete denial of the popular idea that senators are decayed politicians sitting out \$10,000-a-year appointments in idleness.

He rarely misses a Senate sitting, is chairman of the heavily burdened Senate divorce committee, keeps up a thriving law practice in Toronto and is one of the country's most active labor conciliation experts.

When he isn't involved in one of these fields, Senator Roebuck might be found on a golf course (he shoots in the low 80s) or relaxing with paint brush and easel. Both hobbies are late-life acquisitions. He began golfing when he was 50 and took up all painting at 70.

Retirement, he says, is something young men should plan for and old men should avoid. Friends of the senator point to him as a living argument against Prime Minister Diefenbaker's proposal to retire senators at 75.

### OPPOSES REFORM

Senator Roebuck has nothing but scorn for his or any other plan to revamp the Senate. He predicts that none will ever get through the upper house, which would have to approve any legislation before it could become law.

He describes so-called Senate reform as a "plot" by senior civil servants who want the Senate out of their way. "We are the only people on Parliament Hill the civil servants can't control."

His silvery hair retails streaks of its original black, his walk is brisk and his high-pitched voice clear and commanding. He may doze off during a dull Senate debate after a particularly round divorce committee session, but more often he is on his feet with sharp questions about some government bill.

A heart attack five years ago—"not much of a one"—hardly caused him to break stride. When doctors advised resting up, his one concession was to decline any more cases involving appearances before the Supreme Court of Canada. He is a pack-week smoker, takes an occasional drink and maintains that hard, honest work is the best formula for a long and active life.

### DISMISSED IPS

Senator Roebuck has been in politics since 1911 but wasn't elected until 1934 when the Liberals swept into power in Ontario. He became attorney-general in the first Hepburn cabinet and for a time held a triple portfolio with labor and hydro.

He revamped the attorney-general's department, dismissed

10,000 justices of the peace and 89 magistrates to streamline the court system.

In 1957, he rewrote power contracts to reduce power costs by \$7,000,000 a year and as labor minister introduced legislation forcing companies to honor collective agreements.

In 1957 he split sharply with Hepburn over interference in the General Motors strike at Oshawa, resigning from the cabinet with David Croll who had taken over the labor ministry and who now is a Senate colleague.

"You may remember Croll's historic remark that he'd rather walk with the workers than ride with General Motors. That went for both of us."

Senator Roebuck entered Parliament in 1949 as MP for Toronto Trinity and made a bit for the Ontario leadership when Hepburn resigned in 1943. He says he thought he had Ontario's backing to the leadership convention but found out too late that it had been withdrawn.

### "HORRIBLY TREATED"

"I was horribly treated by the Ottawa cabinet. They got me out on a limb and sawed it off."

He believes it was partly to compensate for such treatment and partly to reward his work as Liberal strategist in the 1945 federal election that Prime Minister Mackenzie King appointed him to the Senate April 18, 1945.

When the new Parliament met, the 67-year-old rookie senator took his seat in the side chamber, often described as an

old man's home for worn-out politicians and cabinet castoffs.

At that point Arthur Roebuck seemed to be entering the twilight of a long career. He had much to look back on.

Born at Hamilton, Feb. 28, 1878, he spent five boyhood years in Victoria before the family returned to Ontario in 1885 and took up farming near Gosport, moving into Toronto in 1894.

His first job was as a 51-a-week elevator boy for a Toronto wholesale dry goods firm. It took him five years to move up to a clerk's \$8 salary and become convinced that he wasn't cut out for the business world.

By cramming the last three years of high school into six months of intense study he won entry to law school. At that time two years of apprenticeship was needed to get into Osogode Hall and the young Roebuck found stuffy law offices "too slow for my blood."

### RAN WEEKLY PAPER

He spent five "very active, very profitable" years as a re-

porter for the Toronto Star, then went to the Northern Ontario town of New Liskeard to take over a weekly newspaper that a younger brother had been running when typhoid killed him.

"I took it largely for sentimental reasons and lived up north for 10 years."

As editor of the now-defunct Timiskaming Herald he soon was deep in politics, a calling he feels came to him naturally.

The senator was proud in his memory of a great-uncle, John Arthur Roebuck, who left Canada at 20 and became a British MP.

"Long before the outbreak of riding in both the Canadas in 1857, he envisaged the Canadian nation as we know it today and publicly advocated its creation. He was the original Father of Confederation."

The young editor was a candidate three times in Timiskaming, once for the voters' seat and twice for the legislature. Those were rough times for new politicians and the senator still retains bitter memories.

Timiskaming riding then ran from New Liskeard "clear to the North Pole" and the senator says competitors were often too good at finding Conservative voters and omitting Liberals.

He finally gave up, "sold the

paper for a few dollars" and returned to Toronto around 1877. He used the money to finish law school, graduating 17 years after his original enrolment.

Law and politics mixed easily and he soon was prominent in Toronto's influential Liberal group. "Generally speaking, a great leader."

He had the way they selected Hepburn, "a genuine rabble-rouser" who, "had he remained the same as he was when we elected him, would have been

inere was stagnation in government then. A few of us determined we would change it."

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