

In reading through the transcripts of the joint committee so far, I am somewhat puzzled. I can see them getting into matters involving conflicts of a certain kind. However, I really wonder whether the accumulated experience of these people before they came to this chamber — their upbringing by their parents, their education and their spiritual beliefs — is not enough, in combination with the appropriate sections in the Parliament of Canada Act and the Criminal Code. With that accumulation of experience and those statutes to guide us, if we do not understand what is expected of us, then we should not be here.

Honourable senators, I find that whole process offensive, and I think that, in your hearts, most of you will tend to agree with me. This is a charade. They may come up with a few small things, such as if you have a share in a certain company you should not sit on a certain committee, but on the basis of morality, on the basis of being able to determine what is a bribe and what is not, or how one should behave oneself, do you not find that this whole exercise is useless?

**Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I have sympathy for what Senator MacDonald has said. However, I hope it is not a useless exercise. The preface to the honourable senator's question is, in large measure, very true. As the honourable senator will know, over the years, regardless of which party has been in power, this issue has arisen almost cyclically. It arises again and again, demanding to be examined.

I am sure that there are always points which can be re-emphasized and set out with greater clarity, perhaps not for the benefit of those who serve in our chambers but for the reassurance of people outside our chambers.

I have followed this issue for a great many years. I know that the senators and the members of the House serving on that committee are doing so out of goodwill. I am sure that their intent is to reflect in their report anything that would be helpful to us or to the public.

Honourable senators, I agree with Senator MacDonald that in public life, as in private life, the degree to which the standards are reflected is based very much upon what is inside the individual.

**Hon. Peter Bosa:** Honourable senators, is the honourable leader aware that the teachings of our parents, the ethics by which we try to abide and all the things which pertain to behaving properly, including the Criminal Code, have been taken into consideration in studies conducted in the past? It is not the case that we have suddenly reached a level of ethics such that there is no longer a need to attempt to improve the situation.

**Senator Fairbairn:** Yes, honourable senators, I am aware of that. I know that members of the committee are finding parts of the study very interesting, even engrossing, and are putting their

minds to the task. I emphasize that, in fact, the exercise is a useful one. It is useful for the participants as well as for the reassurance of those in the public who may have a view of our activities which differs from reality.

Ultimately, however, as Senator MacDonald has said, the compliance with all the rules known to humankind which can be put down on paper is within the wills and the hearts of those serving in public life.

## ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

### RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Hon. Noël A. Kinsella:** Honourable senators, further to the questions asked by our colleague Senator Watt, is it the position of the Government of Canada that the aboriginal peoples of Canada have the right to self-determination?

**Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators are aware of the position aboriginal people hold within the Constitution. The aboriginal people have been a fundamental part of the building of this country. They have contributed to the unity of this country. That will continue. In constitutional discussions down the road, whenever they occur, I am sure they will be playing an active role.

**Senator Kinsella:** Honourable senators, is it the position of the Government of Canada that the aboriginal peoples have the right to sovereignty?

**Senator Fairbairn:** Honourable senators, I would wish to examine with others the import of the honourable senator's question. In terms of the position of aboriginal peoples in this country, their inherent right to self-determination is protected under section 35 of our Constitution, as the honourable senator well knows.

### RATE OF ILLITERACY AMONG NATIVE YOUTH— GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Hon. Noël A. Kinsella:** Honourable senators, those questions were motivated by the questions raised by Senator Watt.

Independently, I wanted to question the minister on the development of aboriginal communities across Canada. I would like to draw attention to aboriginal youth in Canada. The Minister of Human Resources Development announced some time ago that 16 new programs, aimed at 17,500 Indian youths on reserves, would start this month.

Statistics cited by the minister indicated that 60 per cent of the people on reserves are illiterate. As minister responsible for literacy, what percentage of native youth is classified as illiterate? How big is that problem for which you are responsible, Minister?