

presented his tenth report. The Speaker asked when it would be taken into consideration, and the chamber agreed, at the next sitting.

• (1600)

On June 2, 1988, Senator Molgat explained that the tenth report dealt with a rule change to avoid any thought that the Internal Economy Committee might not require the approval of the Senate itself for its measures. Senator Molgat said:

The feeling was that there should be proper approval by the Senate, as there is for every other committee of the Senate, and that final decision on anything must be taken by the Senate itself.

The senators agreed. Approval must be by the Senate — not by an interdepartmental letter on strategy, and not by a committee that had no funds to spend and no details of the work at hand; certainly not by a subcommittee where three or four souls gathered beyond the eyes and ears, not only of the media, but of the Senate itself.

Honourable senators, the importance of our views, pro or con, on the long-term plan for repairs and renovations on Parliament Hill pales beside the issue of the Senate's right to be informed and to decide itself, upon the basis of facts presented, what action is appropriate for the collective. If we allow such rights to atrophy, we will have gone a great distance toward effective abolition.

Honourable senators, the "department of delayed answers," at the outset of its recently submitted statement, notes that the third of my questions dealt with a new committee room intended for the Centre Block, a part of the Public Works Department strategy that had not been debated in the Senate. I should note that Senator Hastings, that very day, did present the fourth and fifth reports of the Internal Economy Committee. Again, no mention.

What I missed on May 12 was the tabling of the committee's sixth report with a single-sentence reference to the Centre Block facility. Even that reference was not heard in the chamber. It was subsequently printed in the *Minutes of Proceedings of the Senate*. Again, the senators were given no opportunity to vote. Tabling, after all, is for information only.

The events of May 12, insofar as the committee is concerned, have surfaced once again, this time in a memo from the Senate's Director of Services to Senator Hastings. The director says:

As part of the long-term renovation strategy of Parliament Hill, reviewed and approved by Internal Economy on December 12, 1991, and subsequently reconfirmed by the Committee on May 12, 1994 (and reported to the Senate the same day), the construction of a new committee room in the Centre Block forms but one aspect. Public Works and Government Services Canada has seen this undertaking as an opportunity to address the long-standing problem of committee facilities. As such, I have recently been informed that the Minister of Public Works and Government Services

Canada has given approval for the department to proceed with the project.

I would therefore like to advise that the Parliamentary Precinct Directorate will be commencing with construction as early as the beginning of December. Although a firm schedule has yet to be established, I will endeavour to keep everyone informed as the dates become set.

Should you have any questions concerning this project, do not hesitate to call my office.

Honourable senators, that memo was written on November 28, the day I gave notice of my intention to raise this matter in this chamber one last time.

I thank you for your patience, honourable senators.

Hon. Consiglio Di Nino: May I ask my honourable colleague a few questions?

Senator Doyle: I will do my best to answer them.

Senator Di Nino: First, I should inform honourable senators that a spirited discussion on this very matter took place today at a joint committee meeting of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures and the Subcommittee on Budgets and Personnel of the Internal Economy Committee.

Perhaps we can place that item on the agenda of the full committee so that we can discuss, in particular, the rules to which the honourable senator has referred.

Honourable senators, it was obvious in our deliberations this morning that there are some rather serious differences of opinion — my colleague Senator LeBreton was with me — as to what, when and how the Internal Economy Committee should present to the senators and/or the Senate.

Perhaps I could ask two questions of the honourable senator.

I am not sure as to what extent Senator Doyle thinks the chamber should be involved in the making of decisions respecting the expenditure of funds or other activities that affect the Senate or senators. In particular, once a budget has been approved and has gone through the necessary steps, should components of that particular document, which should contain most of the items, be discussed or is it the whole document that you think should be discussed? I ask for some direction on this matter.

Senator Doyle: Honourable senators, I think I can say it is not particularly or always the amount of money involved. People arrived here one day last summer to find the post office no longer functioning. No notice had been given that the post office was being taken away and moved to a place where it had never been before.

I remember one member of the committee a couple of years ago saying, "Don't ever let them move the post office." He is now Governor General and has no opinion on these matters.