

the Constitution Act, 1982, the witnesses who appeared before the committee said repeatedly that what took place at a federal-provincial conference was done without proper study, without proper advice from the legal advisers of the Crown and without an understanding of what the final resolution meant. That opinion was expressed by at least one of the Premiers, although others backed off from expressing their disapproval of that resolution. So we have had before us an example of a federal-provincial conference taking precipitate action without having sufficiently studied a subject.

Now that we are undertaking studies relating to changes to the institution of Parliament itself, any committee established for that purpose, jointly or otherwise, should be given the time it requires, even if it takes a year to conduct its study. So I suggest to you that we should remove any reference to a deadline date in this resolution; the conference of first ministers should wait until Parliament has studied this matter, rather than having it the other way round.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator McElman:** Once the committee has completed its study, made its report and/or recommendations, the first ministers can then consider the actions of Parliament.

There is one question I should like to ask the former chairman of that committee. Under the former resolution the committee had the right to travel. It is my understanding that the committee has completed its study and there is no need for it to travel any further. If that is the case, why does the committee now seek the right to travel?

**Hon. Stanley Haidasz:** They should go to Australia.

**Senator Molgat:** If I may be permitted to reply—

[Translation]

**Hon. Fernand E. Leblanc:** Honourable senators, I think it is important at this stage to indicate the outcome of the motion which was moved in December 1982 to establish the committee. Everybody agreed at the time, but the committee began to sit only in early May.

In the initial motion, the committee was granted one year to table its report; but in view of the fact that for a reason which I do not know, the committee began to sit only in May, it would be reasonable to follow Senator Asselin's suggestion to extend the time limit to March 31, 1984. Then the committee would have had one year to fulfill its mandate, and considering the progress the committee has made so far in its study of the first draft of the report, it could meet the late March deadline. Not everybody thinks that the said report could be tabled by March 31. I am under the impression that a new motion will be moved to obtain an extension.

[English]

**Senator Frith:** Honourable senators, I think that I can focus on the question by referring to what Senator Deschatelets has said. I did not pick this date of January 31.

**Senator Riley:** Is this the end of the discussion? If you speak now does that end the discussion?

**Senator Frith:** It should.

[Senator McElman.]

**Senator Riley:** In that case, I wish to say a word or two.

**Senator Frith:** That is why, when I stood up, I waited to see if someone else wished to speak on the matter.

**Senator Asselin:** You are too fast.

**Senator Frith:** I will wait, then; patience is a virtue.

**Senator Riley:** If this discussion has done nothing else, it has added to my confusion. Of course, I don't have a great deal of parliamentary experience—

**Some Hon. Senators:** Oh, oh.

**Senator Riley:** —but I have always thought that when a session was prorogued, everything on the order paper died. Senator Asselin has stated that the members of the committee met this morning. To what committee is he referring?

**Senator Asselin:** It was an unofficial meeting.

**Senator Riley:** But you stated that members of the committee met this morning. There is no committee. The committee was instructed, when it was appointed a year ago, to produce a report by December 2. Apparently it was unable to do so. I do know of at least one person who wished to appear before that committee as a witness, a witness who would have made a valuable contribution to the report of that committee.

We have been told that the committee has just about completed its study.

**Senator Asselin:** It is in the process of that.

**Senator Riley:** In any event, the committee is dead now. Anything left unfinished in the last session of this Parliament died on the Order Paper when the session was prorogued.

Someone has suggested that we can simply retype the instructions for that committee, and that might be an answer.

I am inquisitive by nature and I should like to know whether this committee—when and if it is reconstituted or a new committee is appointed—will have a new agenda? Will witnesses be given the opportunity to appear before the new committee, or will the report be based on the evidence given before the old committee?

One can do everything behind the scenes; one can pick up where one left off, but in this instance the committee died when the session was prorogued. It does not exist any more. We are supposed to be senior legislators.

● (1450)

**Senator Roblin:** That's right.

**Senator Riley:** In my experience, particularly in recent months—

**Senator Asselin:** Or your lack of experience.

**Senator Riley:** In recent months, I have observed some steamrolling going on in the Senate and that goes against the grain. My point is that, if a new committee is set up, it should be set up properly. I do not think we should be told that "perhaps we can have the report by January 31." I do not think that any member of that committee or any honourable