

Senator Frith: In the House of Commons, you would not be able to speak three times in the same debate.

Senator Doody: He probably would not be able to speak once.

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat: Honourable senators—

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I must inform the Senate that if the Honourable Senator Molgat speaks now, his speech will have the effect of closing the debate.

Senator Molgat: Honourable senators, in some ways the debate we have just had is a replica of the debate we had in committee. I think it was an excellent and extremely useful debate, and I want to thank those who have participated here. With regard to Senator Godfrey's comments, there was very extensive discussion on these matters in committee. I believe he attended every one of the committee meetings although he was not a member of the committee, and he participated fully in the discussions. The vote in the committee was unanimous—

Senator Godfrey: No, on division. I was there.

Senator Molgat: But you are not a member of the committee.

Senator Godfrey: Of course, you are correct.

Senator Molgat: That does not mean that we cannot re-open that matter at some other time. I think this is an example of the flexibility and the advantage that we in the Senate have in our methods of operation. Senator Godfrey made four suggestions in his speech which he thought the committee might look at. The committee looked at all of them in depth. It accepted one of them which is now part of the recommendations made to this house. That is the recommendation that on any matter affecting provincial governments the chairman of the committee ought to contact the provincial governments and allow them the opportunity to appear, if they so wish, and make presentations before the committee. This exercise shows how easily we can amend our rules and how we can adapt to the conditions when we think it is necessary to do so.

The reason why there were no explanations given in the report is that, as you will recall, this report was presented at the very end of the session. In fact, the last meeting of the committee was held the day before the session was to end. It was felt that we should make a quick report to the Senate, and there was no opportunity to call a further meeting of the committee. Honourable senators will know that there are some timing problems in calling meetings of committees, and the suggestion was made that the steering committee ought to proceed with preparing a report and tabling it in the Senate. Therefore the steering committee agreed that the report ought to be a simple statement of the fact; that we could then have a debate in the Senate and I would explain the discussion we had had. There was no attempt to hide anything. For that matter, the transcripts of all of the meetings of the committee are available to all senators. We send the transcripts to every member of the committee and to any other member of the Senate who expresses a desire to receive them.

[Senator Godfrey.]

• (1550)

If there are any other suggestions by senators for changes in rules, the committee would be prepared to consider those suggestions. I move the adoption of the report.

Senator Godfrey: I suppose I must put my remarks in the form of a question. Is it not true that the committee did not consider my suggestion about asking the provincial authorities to appear before the committee? I understand that that was passed in the other place without being referred to our committee. What was considered was this question of an alternative to Royal Assent, but our committee did not consider my suggestion. I think the matter was put before a meeting of committee chairmen and perhaps my honourable friend is confused.

Senator Molgat: I may be wrong; I may have forgotten what transpired but I am prepared to check my record. I believe I am correct that the committee did consider the matter of provincial representation and came back with a recommendation that we not change the rules but that we accept, as a matter of principle in this house, that that be done in future and, in fact, I believe I specifically asked the Director of the Committees Branch to make sure that all committee clerks be alerted to warn their chairmen whenever they saw the possibility of such a circumstance arising. That was a decision of this Senate, as a result of a recommendation of the committee.

Motion agreed to and report adopted.

THE BUDGET

ELIMINATION OF FULL INDEXATION OF PENSION BENEFITS— IMPACT ON SENIOR CITIZENS—MOTION WITHDRAWN

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Frith, seconded by the Honourable Senator Petten:

That, in view of the adverse effects on the standard of living of senior citizens resulting from the elimination of full indexation of pension benefits, it is the view of the Senate of Canada that the government should rescind this particular provision of the Budget immediately.—(*Honourable Senator Petten.*)

Hon William J. Petten: Honourable senators, I yield to Senator Frith.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, as we can see this motion has to do with the indexation of pensions. If I understand correctly the consequences of the action taken by the Government, it has already been changed. The content of this motion has not necessarily been accepted but we agree with the action of the Government. For this reason, I ask leave to withdraw the motion.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is it the pleasure of honourable senators that the motion be deemed to have been withdrawn?