

THE SENATE

Tuesday, May 31, 1988

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

THE LATE HONOURABLE PAUL C. LAFOND, D.F.C.

TRIBUTES

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to our colleague, Senator Paul Lafond, who passed away last Friday and whose funeral took place this morning in Hull.

When Paul Lafond was appointed to this chamber in 1970, he was in excellent company. Other new senators included the former Premier of Alberta, Senator Ernest Manning, our colleague, Senator Molgat and the eminent Senators Thérèse Casgrain and Eugene Forsey.

[*English*]

It would be fair to say that Paul Lafond's arrival in the Senate was somewhat overshadowed by the eminent company of new senators who came to the Senate at the same time. But when, on Friday, after eighteen years, he left us, he was one of our best known and most respected colleagues on Parliament Hill, in Canada and abroad. The reports of his committee on Defence Policy have been among the highlights of recent Parliaments.

Less known outside our immediate circle in the Senate was the care, patience and good humour with which, for some years, he coordinated committee schedules in this place—surely one of the most thankless tasks ever visited upon a colleague.

[*Translation*]

Before being appointed to the Senate, Paul Lafond had for many years been a key member of the national organization of the Liberal Party of Canada. For twenty years, from 1948 to 1968, Senator Lafond held the position of general secretary of the Liberal Federation of Canada. In that capacity he helped organize the conventions that saw the leadership of the Liberal Party go from Mackenzie King to St. Laurent, from St. Laurent to Pearson, and from Pearson to Trudeau. With his passing, another page in our history has been turned.

[*English*]

My cabinet colleague, the Honourable Flora MacDonald, was Paul Lafond's counterpart at national Conservative headquarters for many years. She spoke the other day warmly and with great regret of her political rival and good friend.

[*Translation*]

Beyond party lines, there is one thread that runs through all the stages of Senator Lafond's career and that is the armed forces.

From 1940 to 1945, he served as an officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force. His exploits over the Atlantic earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Later, after his arrival in the Senate, Paul Lafond presided over the proceedings of the Senate Subcommittee on National Defence. He demonstrated his intellectual independence, criticizing the cuts made at the Department of National Defence, although they had been made by his own government.

I remember his trenchant and perhaps far-sighted comments in 1983, when he described the pitiful state of our armed forces. He said drily that our navy might be able to fend off an attack by St. Pierre and Miquelon!

He again demonstrated his independence and the fact that he was a man of deep convictions when he voted against the 1982 constitutional amendment presented by his government.

[*English*]

This morning at the funeral mass in Hull the presiding priest spoke of Paul Lafond's commitment to Canada and of his service to this country. He also emphasized Paul Lafond's attachment to his own corner of Quebec and Canada. He spoke of Paul Lafond's concern for the poor and the unfortunate of that city and region, of the leadership he gave as chairman of the annual fund-raising campaigns of Centraide, of his work for les oeuvres du Cardinal Léger.

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, I am sure everyone in this Chamber will want to join the government in offering our condolences to Stella, Senator Lafond's wife, his two sisters and his friends.

[*English*]

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I should like to associate the members of this side of the house and the members of the Liberal caucus and myself with the words of tribute that Senator Murray has so appropriately paid to the memory of the late Paul Lafond.

It does not seem, to me at least, that 18 years have passed since Paul Lafond was summoned to the Senate, having served for many years previously as an important official in the National Liberal Federation. It was during that period of his career that I had occasion to work with him on various electoral matters. At that time he established himself as an extremely competent person, who enjoyed the confidence of his party and the party leaders. That certainly was demonstrated