

THE SENATE

Wednesday, September 23, 1992

The Senate met at 2.00 p.m., Senator Gérald J. Comeau, Acting Speaker, in the Chair.

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

GENERAL ELECTION

NUMBER OF DAYS LEFT IN CURRENT TERM

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, there are 58 days left for the democrats and 454 days for the contemptuous ones.

DAI AL-MUTLAQ

OPPOSITION TO BILL TO INCORPORATE

Hon. Philippe Deane Gigantès: Honourable senators, yesterday we had a bill presented to us by the Honourable Senator Atkins to provide a corporation sole for the Dai al-Mutlaq. I would like to read a copy of a letter that I have received which was addressed to Mr. William Charles Winegard, one of the government's ministers, which states:

I would very much appreciate to receive the information regarding the application for private act to incorporate the Dai al-Mutlaq as a corporation sole as published in the *Globe and Mail* (the copy enclosed).

I would like to know as to why someone would make such application and what would be the purpose and intent of that. How it would affect the community as a whole and the individual members of the community who are citizens of Canada.

I also would like to know what steps as an individual I can take to oppose this application if it is going to be detrimental to our well being.

Dai al-Mutlaq who resides in Bombay, India has over the years exploited, blackmailed, outcasted the individuals from the community and carried out religious castration of the members who have not acceded to his unending demands, especially monetary.

I am afraid if this application is going to worsen our situation. If it is, then I like many others would like to take steps to oppose it.

I would appreciate your early reply.

Some time ago, when Dai al-Mutlaq wanted to visit some members of his community in Kenya, the Government of Kenya barred him because the community was so divided over his acts and his reputation.

Perhaps the Leader of the Government in the Senate should ask his friend, who is the lawyer for this person, to perhaps reconsider being associated with a man like this.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, it is not my custom to participate during the period that is reserved for Senators' Statements, but I think I should make a point or two in respect to the intervention we have just heard from Senator Gigantès.

The first point that I wish to make, since he brought my name into it, is that in my view, and I believe I am supported by the authorities, including *Beauchesne's*, Canadian citizens have a right to petition Parliament in the way this group has petitioned us. As I said yesterday, I have come to no final conclusion on the substance of the matter. I have not even come to any preliminary conclusion as to the substance of the matter.

I am, however, certain that they have a right to petition Parliament in the way they have and, as I did yesterday, I thank Senator Atkins for having brought the matter forward.

This brings me to my second point. The arguments advanced by Senator Gigantès on behalf of someone who wrote a letter to a minister would be better put forward, it seems to me, in the course of the debate which Senator Frith adjourned yesterday and which will be resumed later today, tomorrow or at the first opportunity. He will have an opportunity to express his views and his correspondent will have an opportunity—and I hope Senator Gigantès will so advise his correspondent—to come to the committee and to make representations and ask questions about the application.

I do not think we should allow our views, or the views of anyone else, to colour the process and to interfere with the undoubted right of these people and other Canadian citizens to petition Parliament from time to time.

Senator Gigantès: Would the Leader of the Government permit a question on this?

Senator Murray: I suggest we take it up in debate.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

EXCISE TAX ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition) presented Bill S-14, to amend the Excise Tax Act.

Bill read first time.