

Is Senator Phillips right when he says that there will be criticism of us for deciding to stiffen our spines and take our responsibility? Of course he is right; of course there will be criticism. But surely the question is, if we are right—and I think we are—should we let that deter us? I hope not. I hope we will not let that deter us.

I respect the opinion of any senator who thinks that there should be a joint committee as I respect the opinion of any senator who disagrees with my view that if there is a separate committee, it should be a Committee of the Whole. However, honourable senators, let us not decide anything of this kind on the basis of fear of criticism. When the Fathers of Confederation set up this body, they must have known that there would always be criticism directed at it for its activities when it accepted its responsibilities, if those responsibilities were unpopular with the press or with members of the House of Commons.

Honourable senators, I have nothing further to say about the question of a joint committee, because I have outlined why I think it would be a terrible mistake and an abdication of our duty to go with a joint committee on this occasion. However, on Senator Lang's question of whether it should be a Committee of the Whole or a select committee, I remind honourable senators of the intervention by Senator MacEachen, when he introduced this motion, as to the reasons why we should have a Committee of the Whole. In summary, those reasons that recommend themselves to me are: I believe that this is the kind of matter in which all senators should be present for all proceedings, and that those proceedings should take place right here in the chamber. I think the Committee of the Whole is eminently suitably designed for this procedure.

Also, I think we can take heart from the proceedings that we held on the Canada-France question. I thought that they were dignified. No witness who ever appeared here objected, and I recommend that to Senator Lang's potential witnesses. I do not know how much they know about the procedure of Committee of the Whole in the Senate. Senator Lang says that they have some fear that there will be too many histrionics. In fact, I have seen more histrionics in select committees than I ever saw in Committee of the Whole. Senator Lang has been here longer than I have, but I have been here for more than ten years, and every time we have had Committee of the Whole, it has either been on the Canada-France matter or it has been when we have had some special bill: for example, the question of a strike that required legislation for settlement, or other occasions when it was suitable to have the minister appear before Committee of the Whole. Honourable senators, on none of those occasions do I recall any histrionics. Certainly there was none on the Canada-France hearings. Perhaps Senator Lang was not present for those, but I do not remember any histrionics on the Canada-France hearings, and I would have been very proud to have those proceedings produced on television. I never heard a complaint from a witness.

Therefore, I thank Senator Lang for having studied the two versions and having come up with what I believe is a true and correct analysis; that there are many technical issues and

questions on which we must have advice. However, there are also some very broad issues, and on the broad issues I think the Senate Committee of the Whole would be a perfect vehicle to deal with them in the same way as we did with the Canada-France agreement. I also think it would be the perfect vehicle to deal with the detail. For example, someone who has publicly made some comments on the technical aspects of the Meech Lake accord: John J. Robinette. Why should all of us not have the benefit of Mr. Robinette coming here? We are not going to pull any histrionics on Mr. Robinette. We are going to listen to him and hear what he has to say, and we are all going to benefit from his advice.

Therefore, honourable senators, I really believe that this is a classic example of an undertaking by the Senate of Canada to fulfil its responsibilities under the Constitution; to do so separately; to accept its separate and distinct responsibility, and I do believe that the Committee of the Whole is the perfect place in which to do it, because I think we should all be present and all participate and be enlightened and edified at the same time, and together, for this important process.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Phillips: Honourable senators, before I direct a question to Senator Frith, let me congratulate him on the progress he is making with his drama lessons. You are doing very well, sir.

Senator Frith: I am not taking any lessons, but I am prepared to give some, if you wish—for a fee.

● (1550)

Senator Phillips: The question I would like to ask in an effort to get clarification is this: I believe the Honourable Senator Frith said that the motion introduced by Senator MacEachen was made prior to Mr. Trudeau's nailing his edict on the doors of Parliament. Is that correct?

Senator Frith: No, the notice of the motion was given prior. As I recall it, the notice was given on a Tuesday. Mr. Trudeau's declaration, or whatever the right word is, was made on the Wednesday of the same week. I may be wrong, but I believe I am right. Check it.

Senator Phillips: I will do that.

On motion of Senator Doody, for Senator Murray, debate adjourned.

[Translation]

THE ESTIMATES, 1987-88

INTERIM REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONCLUDED

On the order:

Consideration of the Eleventh Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance (Main Estimates 1987-88), presented in the Senate on 28th May, 1987.—
(Honourable Senator Leblanc (Saurel)).

Hon. Fernand-E. Leblanc: Honourable senators, the report tabled on Thursday, May 28, is an interim report. It explains