

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, if no other senator wishes to speak, this inquiry is considered debated.

### THE SENATE

#### ABSENCE OF APPROVAL FOR VARIOUS PROJECTS— DEBATE ADJOURNED

**Hon. Richard J. Doyle** rose pursuant to notice of Tuesday, November 29, 1994:

That he will call the attention of the Senate to the absence of Senate approval for various projects in the purview of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets, and Administration.

He said: Honourable senators, I am grateful for the government's provision of information in reply to a series of questions I asked in this chamber between March 15 and May 12 of this year. Although the questions asked related to various work projects being carried out in the parliamentary precincts, they were not intended to pass judgment on the worth of the undertakings. The questions dealt quite specifically with whether the Senate itself had been properly advised and whether its members were given the required opportunity to vote their approval or rejection. Those questions, I am sincerely sorry to say, remain unanswered.

I am grateful to the "government department of delayed answers" for a detailed explanation of who owns what, who may do which, and how the Minister of Public Works and the rest of us may act or interact in carrying out the good intentions of what is known as "The Long-Term Construction Project." That project, we are told, flowed from earlier studies which concluded there was something rotten in the structures which stand on the Hill.

In 1988, 12 years after the Abbott Commission reported, Treasury Board and Public Works were authorized to develop "The Plan." A draft blossomed two years later and in late 1991, it was "brought to the attention" — and those are the words used — of the Honourable Thérèse Lavoie-Roux, who was Chair of the Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration.

Smelling the possibility of action, the senator replied to Public Works saying:

The Senate is prepared to support your plan.

She was grateful that the Senate had been given "equitable consideration in your strategy," referring to Public Works, and promised that "we will do everything in our power," the "we" being the Internal Economy Committee, to assist in implementation of the plan.

It should be noted that no money was available from any source at this time to proceed with the renovation of the 1910 wing of the East Block or anything else. The delayed government answer says:

On September 17, 1992, Public Works received approval in principle for the Long-Term Construction Project...

and

... on May 26, 1993, effective approval for the 1910 wing.

This, we presume, came from the other place.

At a March 24, 1994 meeting of the Senate Agenda and Procedures Subcommittee of the Internal Economy Committee, the Director of Parliamentary Precincts Directorate, who is from the Department of Public Works, said:

As the accountable officer, I have indicated to my minister that if we do not repair, I will recommend that we close and seal this particular wing.

This refers to the East Block.

At this point, the government's delayed answer repeats the following portion of the minutes of the meeting:

It was agreed that your Subcommittee concurs in the recommendation of Public Works and Government Services Canada for the use of office space in the 1910 wing.

The subcommittee report was adopted by the full committee but was neither presented nor tabled in this chamber.

Suddenly, however, the answers given to me by the government last week leaped to this conclusion:

...in answer to Senator Doyle's question concerning the right of the Senate and of individual Senators to have a voice in the preservation and development of Parliament Hill and the Senate precincts, the Government affirms those rights.

It goes on:

...the Senate, through its Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, has been kept fully informed throughout all stages of development and implementation of the Long-Term Construction Project. Again, it notes that the Senate, through its Standing Committee on Internal Economy, has approved the Long-Term Construction Project both on December 12, 1991 and March 24, 1994. Furthermore, Senators have always had the opportunity to give their views on this matter through debate held under an Inquiry. During the years that the Long-Term Construction Project was under discussion and development, any Senator could have initiated such a debate.

So sayeth the authors of the government's so-called answers — answers to questions that related only to the Senate's threadbare grasp of place in the parliamentary countenance of Canada. Questions, I might add, that after eight months of government rummaging about, remain without direct response in the litter of the excuse-making.

Government inquiries are fine things and every senator should make use of them. But I ask you, should it be necessary to make a formal inquiry to bring into play Senate approval or denial of whatever its committees or committee chairpersons may recommend?

Now, a flashback. On May 31, 1988, Senator Molgat as Chairman of the Standing Committee on Rules and Orders,