

THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 31, 1993

The Senate met at 1:30 p.m., the Speaker *pro tempore* in the Chair.

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

GENERAL ELECTION

CURRENT TERM

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I have a somewhat different statement to make about the clock for the benefit of the election clock watchers. For 133 days now, this government has continued its political cowardice and contempt for the democratic process, to use the words of that same government's leader in the Senate, Senator Murray; he was talking about someone else, of course.

Until he got into power the Prime Minister stood solidly in support of four years as the right term for a Canadian government. The latest device the Prime Minister has used to trick the Canadian people out of an election in the four years, his term, is the calling of a leadership convention. There will be a convention because the Prime Minister chickened out of taking his record to the Canadian people in an election. He chose to quit and then, having quit, to brag about how he would have won, if he hadn't lost his nerve about facing the Canadian people in an election.

By June 12 next, a new leader of the Conservative Party will start trying to find a way to continue tricking the people out of an election. The new leader will want to postpone as long as possible giving Canadians a chance to vote on the government's disastrous eight-year administration, an administration the new leader will have been a part of.

The election clock will be ticking in the meantime and government supporters here can count the days in the same way as our lame-chicken Prime Minister was able to count percentages in the polls. I will not be doing the counting for them between now and the coronation of Mr. Mulroney's handpicked successor.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Frith: Before you get carried away, let me tell you that at the next session of the Senate I intend to resume reminding the new Conservative leader of how every day she or he fails to call an election is another day of what Senator Murray has so aptly described as "political cowardice" and "contempt for the democratic process".

HEALTH AND WELFARE

DRUG PRICES IN CANADA

Hon. M. Lorne Bonnell: Honourable senators, I wish to bring a very important issue to your attention. Some of you may not have heard or read the news today. We fought for several years over Bill C-22 and Bill C-91 with respect to drug prices. We are now being told by the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board that the prices of patented medicine drugs in Canada are the highest in the world. Of 177 drugs, 105 of them were priced above the median price of seven western countries. The number of cases where Canada was the highest in the world was 42, or 24 per cent.

This situation is seen to be so severe that the chairman of the drug prices review board has asked that the government do something to review the matter and to give them more strength to control the prices of drugs. I hope that later today, perhaps in Question Period, the Leader of the Government will tell us what the government intends to do about this situation.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS OF PUBLIC OFFICE HOLDERS BILL

PROPOSED SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE—MESSAGE FROM COMMONS

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that I have received a message from the House of Commons in the following words:

Tuesday, March 30, 1993

ORDERED,—That a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons be appointed for the committee stage consideration of Bill C-116, An Act to provide for greater certainty in the reconciliation of the personal interests and duties of office of public office holders to establish a Conflict of Interests Commission, to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts;

That the Order for resuming second reading of Bill C-116, An Act to provide for greater certainty in the reconciliation of the personal interests and duties of office of public office holders to establish a Conflict of Interests Commission, to amend the Parliament of