

## THE SENATE

Wednesday, December 11, 1991

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

### SENATORS' STATEMENTS

#### CANADA

##### COMMEMORATION OF PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE

**Hon. Heath Macquarrie:** Honourable senators, I am sure that when we came to Parliament Hill this morning, we all noticed that on the courtesy flag-pole there is flying the Royal Union flag, often called the Union Jack, an ensign of which I am very fond. As every schoolboy knows, as Macaulay would say, it is basically the flag of a free Scotland with a couple of other crosses superimposed.

The reason it is flying today is a very important one. December 11, 1931, is the day when the Statute of Westminster was proclaimed, which statute underscored—or legitimized—the independence of this country. As the then Prime Minister, R. B. Bennett said in moving the motion:

I do so with the utmost pleasure because I realize that it is the culmination of the long, long effort that has been made since we were a colony, to become the self-governing dominion that we now are.

There are people who think that "constitutionitis" is a disease of the present generation. It is not. It has been a long, long story from Borden down through to the present time.

This was a magnificent day, when, within the then-existing empire or Commonwealth, it was decreed, agreed, and legitimized that the then-overseas dominions—and indeed all the dominions—were autonomous and in no way subordinate one to another.

My great professor Arthur Lower who, if I were Saint Paul, would be my Gamaliel, used to say that, if Canada had an independence day, it would be December 11. He said:

The Statute of Westminster came as close as was practicable without revolutionary scissors to legislating the independence of the 'Dominions'. There is good ground for holding December 11, 1931 as Canada's Independence Day, for on that day she became a sovereign state.

I look at the flag, and I like it. But that is not the flag that should be there today. In 1965 in the lower house, I departed from my party's view and supported a resolution by Réal Caouette suggesting that the Canadian Prime Minister should go to the Commonwealth meeting and propose the establishment of a Commonwealth flag, just as we have one for the

United Nations and for NATO. I suggest that that is the flag that should be up there.

With hope in my heart, I will write the present Prime Minister and suggest that to him, honourable senators.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

#### THE ECONOMY

##### MEETING OF ATLANTIC PREMIERS

**Hon. Lorne M. Bonnell:** Honourable senators, I will go along with my good colleague from Prince Edward Island about the flag. However, I have a much more important issue than changing the flag at this particular time.

It is that the four Atlantic premiers are meeting in Halifax to discuss the economy of the region. The Prime Minister of Canada has refused an invitation to attend, or even to talk about the economy of Atlantic Canada.

**Senator Barootes:** It is not true.

**Senator Bonnell:** If it is not true, then why does he refuse to go?

**Senator Carney:** This is not question period.

**Senator Barootes:** He does not attend sectoral meetings. He is a national Prime Minister.

**Senator Bonnell:** That is the reason.

**Senator Barootes:** He doesn't attend regional meetings.

**Senator Bonnell:** I guess we are only a section now. We have lost the province. We are now down to a section, according to Senator Barootes. I thought we were the Atlantic area, a region of Canada, and just as important as any other region.

The Prime Minister should make every effort to consult with those premiers. They are the first ministers of their provinces. He happens to be the first minister of Canada, for a short time. If he does not negotiate with those people, I am quite sure their support on other matters might fall away. I know that the premiers are now saying that they will not bring constitutional matters into the economy, or the economy into constitutional matters. But keep snubbing them, keep rubbing them the wrong way, keep ignoring them, keep cutting back on them, and I would say we are likely to end up with them not fighting very hard to hold this country together with the leadership we have in this country today.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 3, 1991-92

##### FIRST READING

**The Hon. the Speaker** informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-47,