

## THE SENATE

Tuesday, June 26, 1990

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

Prayers

[*Translation*]

### THE CONSTITUTION

#### FAILURE OF THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD—MOTION FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

**Hon. Paul David:** Honourable senators, I move that the Senate adjourn now to debate an urgent issue, namely the consequences of the Meech Lake Accord failure.

I am proposing this debate now because we have been through a difficult weekend and I would like to express my own feelings on the failure of this accord.

I am convinced that a number of senators from Quebec and other provinces, at least on this side of the House, would like to express their opinions and feelings following this unique weekend in Canadian history.

[*English*]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Is it agreed, honourable senators?

**Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, in my opinion we should give honourable senators who wish to do so the opportunity to speak to the motion for the special emergency debate. Perhaps no one wishes to speak to the motion; on the other hand, perhaps everyone agrees that we should have it. I should point out that we received no notice of this motion, although it is quite in order to make such a motion without notice. Certainly, the opportunity should be given to any senators who might want it to say that there is no need for an emergency debate on this subject, if they feel the matter is closed and should be allowed to rest quietly.

**Hon. Duff Roblin:** There is a preliminary step that we must take. We need the decision of the Hon. the Speaker as to whether or not he is willing to admit the order. If he says it is in order to proceed with this debate, then unless it is challenged by those on the other side, we will proceed.

**Senator Frith:** That is precisely why we should have an opportunity to speak to the motion. The Hon. the Speaker may have to make a decision, and I am sure he and all honourable senators would be interested in the views of senators as to whether we should adjourn for this debate. The final decision is the Senate's.

**Hon. H.A. Olson:** Honourable senators, we should consider this matter carefully. I have no objection to having an emergency debate. However, I do have an objection to the government springing it upon us. Surely it would have been courteous to let our house leader know about it beforehand.

**Senator Roblin:** Since when was that ever done?

**Senator Olson:** Springing this motion on us at 2.20 p.m. is indicative of the way in which the government has been handling things for the last several weeks, and how they got into this kind of trouble.

I am sure all senators on the other side—at least those who go to their meetings—knew about this motion several minutes ago. However, we on this side did not know about it. Surely honourable senators on this side ought to have a few minutes to decide whether or not they wish to give unanimous consent to this motion.

**Senator Roblin:** The Hon. the Speaker has to rule.

**Senator Olson:** I understand that, but we on this side need time to think the matter over. When the government acts like this, it is no wonder they get into trouble. I am talking for a few minutes so honourable senators can consider the implications. I am sure that Senator Roblin and others understand that. I have had approximately 15 years' experience in doing this from time to time in the other place in order that the people at the Table and in the Chair can check the precedents and know the consequences of taking this kind of action.

However, it is clear that it is extremely discourteous on the part of the Leader of the Government in the Senate to spring this matter on us at this time.

**Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay:** Bourassa said, "Leave it alone; let it rest!"

**Senator Frith:** Honourable senators, in my experience in dealing with my colleague, Senator Doody, this is unusual. I understand that because of the alleged emergency he might have found himself in a position of not being able to give me the kind of notice that we like to give each other.

Without ever having signed anything to that effect, we have an understanding that we try to avoid surprising each other so that each can advise his colleagues of the business for the day and what will be before the Senate for consideration. However, if there is any discourtesy here, I do not want to return discourtesy for it.

**Senator Olson:** It is called tactics, I think.

**Senator Frith:** I am sure it is quite apparent to the government that we have had no opportunity to prepare for such an event as this. I am sure it is understood that in our caucus today we discussed the question of Meech Lake. At that time I offered several versions of how I thought the subject might come before us during today's proceedings, but I did not include this scenario because I did not know that it would happen.