

business I was never able to tell the newspapers which headlines to print. I must hasten to add that it was never my intention to do so, and I never tried.

Senator Thériault: They were hopeful.

Senator Simard: If there is one person who sought and got his headlines in Canso, it was Senator Stewart. Whatever I said in Nova Scotia was exactly what I said at the first meeting, at the second meeting and, indeed, in between the meetings of the special committee studying Bill C-21. What I said was that I, and the government of the day, will always listen to people; that the government has listened during the work of the House of Commons committee, and that we will continue to listen to the people. What I said in Ottawa I happened to repeat in Nova Scotia and in Canso. That, to me, is not earth-shattering, and it is certainly not a ploy for a headline.

However, Senator Stewart, using an old-fashioned trick, said: "Simard has not travelled on the road to Damascus." Let me assure honourable senators that I travelled no different road in Canso than I do in Ottawa. Therefore, Senator Stewart called for that headline, and he is welcome to try again, because it works.

Hon. John B. Stewart: Senator Simard, I have been sitting here quietly listening to your rhetoric. I am sure that the people in the other place are very depressed right now; they are listening to Mr. Wilson's budget presentation. Why are you depressing us here in this chamber? You led us to believe—indeed, you led many people in Canso to believe—that there was something to be hoped for by reason of what you said when you were there. Certainly that was my understanding of what you said. I believe that hundreds of people interpreted your sympathetic hearing of their presentation and what you said exactly as I did.

Now you are saying that we were all wrong. Now that you are back in Ottawa you no longer see the light.

Senator Simard: No, that is not what I am saying.

Senator Stewart: The light has gone out; darkness has descended once more upon your mind.

Senator Simard: No, Senator Stewart, you misunderstood. I am not blaming the newspapers for wrongly reporting this matter. They reported it correctly—

Senator Stewart: You are on record in the committee—

Senator Simard: Yes, I am on record, and I repeat that what I said in Canso I had said at various committee meetings; namely, that I would continue, with my colleagues, to listen and to try to see if something new would emerge, something that had not come out during the hearings in the House of Commons committee.

Senator Stewart: But you said that—

Senator Simard: Please let me finish, senator. I know it is hard for you and some of your colleagues, but there is nothing that I can do about that.

I am not criticizing or chastizing the press for what they put in that newspaper. We too are compassionate; we are reasonable people. Mrs. McDougall is reasonable. That is the point we are trying to make. However, if it cannot be shown to us that there is anything terribly wrong or bad in this bill, then, of course, there would be no need to make amendments to that bill.

In previous legislation this government has shown that it can be convinced to change its mind when something is shown to be perverse or wrong.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, I would like to come back to the bill itself I know that it is customary in this chamber not to name colleagues who are absent or criticize them for being away. With your permission, I must make an exception to this honourable tradition since today in this House we are considering the report of a committee chaired by one of our colleagues, Senator Hébert. We know that it is a result of the personal initiative of a senator who no longer chairs that committee but who directed it for two months. We would have liked him to start earlier, for one thing. I would have liked Senator Hébert to be here with us today.

I think that his absence shows an arrogance, an indifference, a certain desire to crusade, as Senator Tremblay described it. I wonder whether Senator Hébert is serving the institution of the Senate by his absence today. We know that with his iron fist in a velvet glove, he guided, controlled, arranged and decided everything for the members on both sides of the committee. That is in stark contrast to the spirit of conciliation or cooperation which might have led to the negotiations Senator MacEachen spoke of earlier between the House of Commons and the Senate to reach a fair and equitable compromise.

• (1710)

I wish the same desire to cooperate had been present within the Senate Committee which dealt with this bill. It was not, something I find rather regrettable.

Upon his return, Senator Hébert may wish to indicate to us whether he feels it is still possible and desirable, in view of the Committee's experience and if he agrees with Senator MacEachen, if there exists a true desire to negotiate and cooperate.

Honourable Senators, Senator Hébert suggested also that the recommendations contained in his report are of such moderation that they should be acceptable and that the witnesses who were heard were the profound conscience of the country.

He referred—I will return to that later—to the witnesses who were heard and the way they were selected. When Senator Hébert mentioned in his report that one of the reasons why the Committee should have heard again some 40 or 50 witnesses which the other Committee had already heard was that they had not had sufficient opportunity to prepare before appearing before the House of Commons' Committee.

In my opinion, the Committee proceedings and the testimony will bear witness to the fact that 80 per cent of what was heard during this exercise was identical to what the House of