

THE SENATE

Tuesday, December 20, 1988

The Senate met at 8 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.
Prayers.

THE HONOURABLE IAN SINCLAIR

TRIBUTES ON RETIREMENT FROM THE SENATE

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I should like to draw your attention to the fact that our colleague, the Honourable Ian Sinclair, has reached that time in his career when he can no longer remain a member of the Senate of Canada. In fact, Ian Sinclair will reach that magic moment on December 27 next. However, because this is the last day he will spend with us in the Senate, I thought I ought to rise and say something about his remarkable career, not only as a lawyer and a businessman but also as a parliamentarian in the five years that he has spent as a member of this chamber.

It is unnecessary for me to review in detail Senator Sinclair's career, except to say that, initially, he made his reputation as a solicitor in the legal department of the Canadian Pacific Railway. During that period he gained great experience in making presentations and arguments on behalf of the railway before such notable commissions as the Kellock Royal Commission and the MacPherson Royal Commission on Transportation. In fact, he became known as the "Perry Mason" of railway law.

That career as a lawyer subsequently led to even higher responsibilities when, in 1966, he became president of the CPR. During his leadership of that organization it was transformed from a single operation to an important Canadian conglomerate. The name "Sinclair" became synonymous with the CPR. In fact, it is said that many people believed that he owned the CPR. Probably he behaved as if he owned it.

Senator Sinclair was a realist in those days. He knew—in much the same way as we all know about the Senate—that the CPR was not really loved. He said that he worked desperately to secure respect for the CPR even if he could not win the love of the Canadian people for that institution. Honourable senators, he has taken somewhat the same attitude since he has come to the Senate. He knows that the Senate, too, is not the most loved institution in Canada, but he has worked very hard to increase respect among the Canadian people for the Canadian Senate.

I believe that by his participation in the law, in business and in various public service activities Ian Sinclair was well prepared to become an active contributor to the Canadian Senate. For example, in 1982 he took on the onerous task of heading up the restraint program called the "six-and-five program". During his undertaking of that task he exercised all of his

persuasive ability in informing not only the business community and the labour unions but also citizens in general of the necessity for taking action to restrain price increases.

Honourable senators, one might have expected that Ian Sinclair, in coming to the Senate, would regard the work of this chamber as having a low priority among his many responsibilities and the many urgent demands made upon his time. Quite the contrary; the Senate became one of his chief priorities. He performed his work as a member of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce with great care; subsequently, as chairman of the committee, he maintained the high standard of operations of that committee that had been set by his illustrious predecessors.

It may have surprised some people that, as a member of that committee, he would become an investigator of the pricing habits of the multinational pharmaceutical industry, but that, indeed, is what happened. This business tycoon adapted easily to the necessity of ensuring, to the best of his ability, that the interests of the Canadian people were protected. In a sense, he transformed the concept of the Senate as a place of special privilege. Those who knew Ian Sinclair were not surprised that he would take on a role of that kind. Former Canadian Pacific Chairman Fred Burbidge stated that Ian "genuinely enjoyed doing things . . . If there wasn't a crisis going, he'd create one. Partly out of fun, partly from a desire for the resolution of an issue."

It must be said that Ian Sinclair really has enjoyed the Senate. Certainly, he enjoyed that first caper, if I may call it that, that attracted so much attention at the time, but that was small in and of itself—namely, holding up the borrowing bill until the Main Estimates were tabled. Today that caper looks like a small incident, but in the period in which it occurred it was regarded as somewhat of a parliamentary crisis. So all I can say at this moment to Senator Sinclair and his colleagues is that he has been a tower of strength as a member of the Canadian Senate.

Senator Perrault: Hear, hear!

Senator MacEachen: He has been a doer. He has insisted on making a contribution and, despite all the other demands on his time, has been able to give a high priority to the work of the Canadian Senate.

I regret very much indeed that Senator Sinclair will no longer be one of my colleagues. However, I hope that he will drop around now and then to the committee meetings so that the next time we need a crisis we may call Senator Sinclair as an important witness to give it that atmosphere which he enjoys so much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!