

THE SENATE

Thursday, November 30, 1995

The Senate met at 2:00 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

SENATOR'S STATEMENT

MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT

DEFINITION

Hon. Sharon Carstairs: Honourable senators, yesterday I was somewhat surprised at the offence taken by Senator Lynch-Staunton to my use of the term "government member." Because I love words and their very usage, last evening I had a wonderful time reviewing old political science texts and dictionaries to refamiliarize myself with the definitions of these words. My study confirmed that the terms are indeed used in a variety of ways.

First, my study told me that the word "government" can be used in a generic manner to refer to a kind of government. For example, it could be a democratic government, a presidential style of government, a parliamentary system of government, or a republican form of government. Thus, we have the generic use of the word.

The second reference I found said that the word "government" refers to a collection of individuals, elected or appointed, who have the majority of seats in a parliament or legislature. They gather together into a caucus for the purpose of discussion and development, and support the initiatives of the executive branch. I found references to such terms as "government members," "government backbenchers," and "the government side of the chamber." The counterparts, of course, to those expressions were "opposition members" or "the opposition side of the chamber." Sometimes I found references to third parties, fourth parties, and even fifth parties, depending on the distribution of seats, and also the term "independent member".

"Government" can obviously mean a member of a legislative body that supports the government or one who is a member of the governing party, and that was the context in which I referred to myself yesterday.

The third definition of "government," and the narrowest one of all, is in the Canadian concept which refers to the executive branch of our system, the cabinet. These are the individuals assigned specific executive authority and administrative functions. The government in this sense is ably represented in this house by Senator Fairbairn who, as Leader of the Government in the Senate, also has responsibility for literacy. Her title is an interesting one. As Leader of the Government in the Senate, she leads government members, of which I am proud

to be one. Perhaps Senator Lynch-Staunton thinks she leads all of us, but I think he perhaps would not accept that suggestion.

Senator Lynch-Staunton may not use the term "government member" to refer to a member of Parliament who is not in the cabinet. However, let me assure him that it is used often — and frequently in my Province of Manitoba — by government members, opposition members, and members of the media.

If Senator Lynch-Staunton could refer me to the correct usage of the term "government" in this chamber, I would appreciate it. I am deeply committed to the principle of life-long learning, and I always welcome an opportunity to expand my knowledge.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT BILL, 1995

NOTICE OF MOTION TO INSTRUCT COMMITTEE
ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
TO TABLE FINAL REPORT—POINT OF ORDER

On the Order:

That it be an instruction of this House to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs that no later than Monday, December 11, 1995, it present its final report to the Senate on the Message from the House of Commons, dated June 20, 1995, and on the motion of the Honourable Senator Graham dated June 28, 1995, regarding Bill C-69, An Act to provide for the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions and the readjustment of electoral boundaries.

That in its report, the Committee recommend to the Senate that it not insist on its amendments to which the House of Commons disagreed on June 20, 1995. —
(*Speaker's Ruling*)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, under this item, "Government Notices of Motions," yesterday a point of order was raised on a motion by Honourable Senator Carstairs. I am ready with the ruling, but there is the matter of having it typed up and translated. I would ask that I be allowed to bring this matter back later this day, provided I get my typewritten and translated report on time.

Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed