

proliferation of 12 subcommittees all derived from a committee without any reference to or supervision by the Senate.

I think that is a mouthful in itself to one who is at all interested in some discipline in the operation of the Senate. Maybe one should not be interested in such an old-fashioned practice as maintaining discipline in the operation of any body in 1988, but, in addition to that, the senior committee has now added to its list of responsibilities the additional subject of senior citizens. Presumably there is no limit to what this senior committee can do in proliferating subcommittees and in adding new subjects, any one of which could possibly be strained to fit under the general rubric of health and welfare.

I just say: Draw it to my attention and permit me to forget about it as quickly as possible and never ask me to approve it, because I think I would have to oppose it on the grounds that there must be some order and discipline in the operation of a Senate committee, even though it has many subjects deriving from its mandate.

As Senator Hicks said earlier today on another matter, I do not feel deeply about this, but I feel somewhat irritated from the logical point of view that a senior committee can proliferate, without asking permission of the Senate, and then draw the fact to our attention. As I said, draw it to our attention and we will forget about it, but don't ask us to approve it.

Senator Marshall: Honourable senators, I do not want to belabour the point, but there was a special committee struck to consider a subject matter which fell under the responsibility of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, and the Senate approved that. I am thinking of the Special Senate Committee on Youth. The responsibility for youth falls under the mandate of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, but that subject was not referred to that committee; a special committee was struck with added expense and causing more people to cut themselves into pieces to attend all committee meetings.

Honourable senators, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the inquiry and we will go back to the drawing board.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Inquiry withdrawn.

CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TO STUDY SUBJECT MATTER OF BILL C-130—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations), pursuant to notice of Thursday, May 26, 1988, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs be authorized to examine the subject-matter of the Bill C-130, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States of

America, in advance of the said Bill coming before the Senate or any matter relating thereto.

He said: Honourable senators, I shall be brief. The purpose of this motion and the occasion for my speech is to ask my colleagues to agree to a pre-study of Bill C-130, an act to implement the Free Trade Agreement signed with the United States, as far as Canada is concerned.

It is hardly necessary for me to take the time of honourable senators in speaking to the importance of this bill or of this subject matter. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition was heard to say a few days ago that this was one of the most important pieces of legislation to be presented in Canada since the Second World War, and he was right.

There has been no shortage of debate and discussion in the Senate and in its committees on the subject matter in general. Honourable senators will recall the monumental work of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, which began a study in March 1974 on our relations, particularly our economic relations, with the United States and which produced three volumes on the subject, Volume I in December 1975, Volume II in January 1978 and Volume III in March 1982. Those studies concluded by recommending in favour of a free trade treaty between Canada and the United States.

Prime Minister Mulroney announced on September 26, 1985, the intention of the present government to attempt to conclude a Free Trade Agreement with our neighbours to the south. Negotiations commenced on June 17, 1986. The elements of the Free Trade Agreement were agreed to on October 4, 1987, and the official signing of the legal document took place on January 2, 1988.

The elements of the agreement were tabled in this place on October 6, 1987, and referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs on November 5. So the subject of free trade has a long history in recent years in this chamber, and in the Foreign Affairs Committee in particular.

With regard to the agreement presently under consideration, the Foreign Affairs Committee has met 34 times since last November for 62 hours. It has heard 71 witnesses. It has produced one report, or a quasi-report, and I am not sure yet who wants to acknowledge parentage of that report, but it has made a very valuable contribution, particularly to a discussion of the constitutional authority of the federal government in this regard.

So it seems to me, given that history, honourable senators, that nothing could be more logical than to send Bill C-130 to the Foreign Affairs Committee for pre-study. The government would like to see the Senate get a head start, as it were, on the parliamentary process by pre-studying this bill. Naturally, we are interested in that the pre-study could, and probably would, expedite the consideration of the bill, which, in turn, would expedite our preparations, as a government and as a country, for its implementation.

• (1650)

I understand that in the United States Congress the bill is expected to be voted upon by this fall at the latest. In view of