

people with different views within the Roman Catholic Church, one can only imagine how people outside the church are regarded. Does the Senate really want to encourage a group that has such a negative attitude towards Catholics who disagree with it and that is not likely to have a more tolerant attitude towards non-Catholics?

Indeed, in the preamble of the bill before us one of the objects of Opus Dei is stated as being:

... to promote and encourage, among members of society in general, the pursuit of personal sanctification by means of ordinary work;

In clause 3 of the bill, paragraphs (b) and (c) read as follows:

(b) to promote and encourage, among persons in all walks of life, the pursuit of personal sanctification by means of ordinary work; and

(c) to prepare and encourage persons in all sectors of society to give effective Christian witness in their daily activities.

Thus, it is not just the members of Opus Dei who will be affected by the incorporation of the Regional Vicar, but all Canadians, and especially the adolescents who may, at one time or another, be encouraged to participate in activities sanctioned by Opus Dei or see their lives influenced by its activities. Canadian society as a whole will be affected by the passage of this private bill.

● (1540)

May I remind honourable senators of our responsibilities in such matters by quoting from the book by F.A. Kunz, *The Modern Senate of Canada, 1925-1963. A Reappraisal*. On page 210, he says:

In addition to being a jury hearing petitioners and adverse parties the Senate in considering private bills shows great precaution in protecting the interests of the public at large. In so doing it does not hesitate to amend or even to reject private bill petitions.

The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs was told that private bills are not by their nature designed to serve a public interest. Since nothing in the bill is prohibited by an act of Parliament, the bill itself, as an instrument of incorporation, cannot be said to be contrary to the public interest. However, it is still up to the Senate to decide whether it is in the interest of the public at large for the Canadian Senate to be involved in the incorporation of a group that is highly controversial within the Roman Catholic Church and that has demonstrated attitudes and methods that often hurt the free and tolerant society Canadians cherish.

Because of the religious freedom in our country, it is argued that we should not pay attention to the religious aspects of the issue, but simply pass the bill as we would any other request for incorporation. Because similar bills have been approved in the past with little discussion on their merits, there is a body of opinion that holds that this bill should be no exception. However, such an attitude leaves the door open to abuse; the

Senate should be very careful in its approach to bills of this nature.

A controversial religious group is petitioning the Senate for a favour; yet an examination of the group's aims and methods is not deemed necessary simply because it is a religious group. The question we should be addressing is whether or not it is in the interest of the Canadian public for the Senate to become involved at all with this group.

The point is made that, since Opus Dei was granted the status of a personal prelature by the Pope in 1982, the group's only recourse is to become a corporation sole, which, in view of existing laws, can only be established by a private bill in the Senate. But we seem to be forgetting that it was Opus Dei itself that, in the 1960s, lobbied the leaders of the church to obtain the status of personal prelature. It is only because of that change in its status that the Canadian Senate must now try to accommodate Opus Dei. Why must the Canadian Senate be so generous to a group that has little tolerance for some elements of its own church, that has a legacy of involvement in political and financial circles that favour one group rather than society as a whole, and that, despite its denials, still covers many of its activities with a screen of secrecy?

There is another passage in Kunz's work on the Senate of which we should take note. On the subject of private bills, he states, on page 209:

The provisions governing publication and filing of petitions as well as the notification of any person who might be affected serve the purpose of enabling all concerned to have every opportunity to present themselves before the Senate and dispute, if necessary, the bill's passage.

By limiting our discussions in committee to the legal aspects of the bill and by refusing to hear all persons who wanted to speak on all its aspects, have we not failed to give every opportunity for people to make their views known? Opus Dei has been active in Canada for 30 years and, despite its change in status in 1982, it has continued its work without a federal charter. It can operate for another year or more without one. The Canadian Senate does not have to rush to pass this private bill and, indeed, should pay attention to all aspects of the issue, something it has the right and duty to do.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, we are all proud to live in a democratic nation where the individual's freedoms are now based on a Charter of Rights, a nation where each one is free to establish the most bizarre organizations and to propagate the most peculiar cults, including those that may have a negative impact on our society by poisoning the minds of our youngest citizens.

To me and to a number of my most distinguished colleagues, Opus Dei is a kind of bizarre and dangerous cult with a totalitarian streak that teaches blind obedience rather than freedom.

In spite of everything, in the name of freedom itself, I would be ready to fight for Opus Dei having the right to propagate its utter nonsense. However, by opposing Bill S-7 we are in no way limiting Opus Dei's freedom. I had a proof of that in