

THE SENATE

Thursday, September 16, 1992

The Senate met at 4 p.m., the Speaker *pro tempore* in the Chair.

Prayers.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

PRIVATE BILL (S-7)

THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF CANADA—BILL TO AMEND—MESSAGE FROM COMMONS

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, a message has been received from the House of Commons returning Bill S-7, to amend an Act to incorporate the Royal Society of Canada, and acquainting the Senate that they had passed the bill without amendment.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

[English]

GENERAL ELECTION

NUMBER OF DAYS LEFT IN CURRENT TERM

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, for the democrats, there are 64 days until election—

Senator Barootes: How long for the communists?

Senator Frith: For the cowardly and contemptuous, perhaps now speaking up; for those who are in that category—was it Senator Barootes who wanted to know?—there are 450 days.

Senator Barootes: For the communists, how long?

Senator Molgat: Time marches on.

QUEBEC

IMPUGNATION OF PREMIER BY BUREAUCRATS

Hon. Philippe Deane Gigantès: Honourable senators, if you were listening—and why should you?—you may have heard me in the past say nasty things about deputy ministers. I have always considered them to be usurpers of power, closer in character to the Politburo of the old Soviet Union. They lie to their political masters; they hide information; they come to think of themselves as little tin-pot dictators who hold the truth exclusively.

We have an example of dreadful treachery in Quebec on the part of Mme Diane Wilhelmy and the unnamed public servant to whom she was talking on the phone, attacking her master, Premier Bourassa, and using all the slogans of his opponents in her conversation, such as negotiating on one's knees, with holes in one's knees, and all that. I strongly suspect that either she or the unknown person with whom she was talking did the taping themselves. Why? Because they had probably invented in their heads a constitution that they considered better than the one that was finally negotiated.

Many of us have invented constitutions right here. I have invented several. Reforms of the Senate abound. There was one by Senator Bolduc. Senator Beaudoin invents a constitution every other day. Mme Chaput-Rolland was a participant in a great constitutional proposal.

When our political masters, or the government, or others do not accept those proposals which we may think are best, do we turn around and stab them in the back? No, but a deputy minister did that to Premier Bourassa. Another one, Mr. Tremblay, said that Mr. Bourassa was too ill, too weak, that he could not manage to speak at the meetings during negotiations. Yet we see him day after day, answering question after question on his feet in a really tough fight against very abusive opponents. This Mr. Tremblay wants us to believe that Mr. Bourassa does not have the physical or intellectual strengths to do his job. Why? Because he occasionally switched to French. Why did he switch to French? Because the particular nuance of the word in French was important to him, and he wanted to make sure that the French word was in the record.

THE SENATE

CONFLICT OF SITTINGS WITH MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I am a great supporter of the Senate's committee system and I know that those who operate the committee system have been long suffering and patient with the fact that the Senate occasionally acts as a bit of a nuisance and holds sittings which then conflict with the timing of committee meetings. Today we have the National Finance Committee studying Bill C-55. I have a file here of some questions I want to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, who is appearing to-day before that committee. However, their meeting is scheduled for 4 o'clock, as is the Senate sitting.

• (1405)

As I say, on this occasion I suppose we have to recognize that it is the Senate that has caused inconvenience to the committee system. Perhaps we should establish a system whereby