

That is why, honourable senators, we are not getting excited at all. We are proud. We are happy. It is now up to you to act and not to say that we have time. The statutes may be *ultra vires*, but I think it is important that the judgment be implemented as soon as possible.

I hope you will take into consideration the representations made to you today, keeping in mind that we take them to heart, and that you will understand the reasons that made us live through the past 100 years in Manitoba.

Also, I hope you will announce a meeting with the provincial premiers to see to it that this judgment is implemented as soon as possible.

Senator Flynn: I take due note of the short speech Senator Guay has just made. I have said that I rejoice, with him and with the francophones of Manitoba, in the ruling that was brought down. I say I am studying it. He may not have to peruse it to say right off that a conference of the first ministers should be held right away. That is his business. Of course, when one does not realize what a judgment stands for from a legal point of view, one can suggest anything. I have responsibilities. I have no intention of making demagoguery out of this situation.

Once again, I agree that the ruling is based on law, that it reflects an element of justice towards the francophones of Manitoba. I fully agree on that. However, as I have explained—though it might take me one hour to explain it to my friend Senator Guay—the ruling concerns the Legislative Assembly and the Government of Manitoba. If they conform to it, as I am sure they will want to, then there will be no need for me to intervene. You can simply celebrate together over there. We will even join you on the occasion. But do not ask me to stir up trouble before there is any. That would be somewhat ridiculous. I fully agree: you have won; we, francophones have all won. So what? So let us solve the problem and not continue waging the war.

● (1450)

[English]

THE HONOURABLE ALLISTER GROSART

BIRTHDAY FELICITATIONS

Senator Macquarrie: Honourable senators, I have noted since coming to this honourable house that questioners are given great latitude and sometimes, during the course of Question Period, they make small speeches. Before you haul me down, let me say I am all in favour of that. This chamber operates on a consensus which often is literally interpreted as common sense, and I am all in favour of that.

Since I come from Prince Edward Island, which, in addition to being the last stronghold of prohibition was also, as my dear friend Senator Inman will agree, the last stronghold of smugglers, I am going to ask the indulgence of my colleagues to smuggle in something before putting my question. Once honourable senators learn what it is I am smuggling in, I am sure no procedural charges will be pressed.

[Senator Guay.]

Today is the birthday of His Honour the Speaker, a distinguished son of Ireland, a distinguished Canadian, a great internationalist, and a distinguished parliamentarian.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Macquarrie: Even though I cannot speak Gaelic, I should like to extend to him the best of wishes.

AGRICULTURE

POTATO CROP IN EASTERN CANADA

Senator Macquarrie: Honourable senators, my question this afternoon is for the oft-questioned Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, and it is in connection with issues that were raised some days ago in respect of the potato situation, which is very serious in Prince Edward Island and the other eastern provinces—provinces which grow potatoes almost as good as ours.

My question for the minister is whether, as a result of the discussions which have taken place between the provincial ministers of agriculture and the federal Minister of Agriculture, he can now point to any suggestion for the amelioration of the serious situation in which the producers of this very important commodity find themselves.

Senator de Cotret: Honourable senators, I shall have to take the question as notice. I have not had an opportunity to talk to the Minister of Agriculture since the close of those discussions. I shall endeavour to do so in the next day or so, and report back to the chamber.

NORTHERN PIPELINE

PREBUILD SECTION—IMPACT OF NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD DECISION

Senator van Roggen: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce related to the Alaska Highway Project. Is the minister in a position to make a statement to this chamber and, through us, to the people of Canada, as to what are appearing to be the very unfortunate ramifications arising from the recent ruling of the National Energy Board on gas exports to the United States? It appears now as though those exports may be placing the prebuild portion of the Alaska Highway Pipeline Project in jeopardy rather than performing the function they were always understood to perform, that being to assist the prebuilding.

This, of course, brings into question our credibility with our American friends, and has consequences of grave significance to the independent Canadian gas producers who would be supplying their gas if prebuilding proceeds—gas which is now locked in.

I should like to know what information the minister has received from the companies in this connection and, if there is a problem, what legal corrective mechanisms are available to the government to right the situation of having approved—I hope inadvertently, but certainly, it would appear, stupidly—a National Energy Board decision which is couched in terms and