

THE SENATE

Tuesday, June 26, 1973

The Senate met at 8 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

THE LATE DR. GILBERT C. MONTURE, O.B.E.

TRIBUTES

Hon. Eugene A. Forsey: Honourable senators, I should like to ask leave to pay a brief tribute to a very distinguished Canadian who died last week, Dr. Gilbert C. Monture, one of the most illustrious engineers of his time, a distinguished public servant for many years in the Geological Survey of Canada and a notable man in many ways, in many respects. I venture to do so because I knew him for a great many years. He was an old friend of my mother's when they were both in the Geological Survey of Canada, and later, after he retired from the Public Service, he became one of the governors of Trent University where I got to know him very well indeed.

He was, in his later years, after his retirement, called upon by I should think very nearly every government in the world for advice on his subject, mining engineering.

Not only was he a very distinguished man in his profession, but he was a man of immense learning and cultivation far beyond the confines of his own special subject. I may illustrate this by the fact that once in Europe he was attending a scientific congress where he had occasion to discuss a subject with a gentleman who he found knew no English and no other modern language that Dr. Monture himself knew. So they discussed the matter in Latin and became great friends.

I think I need hardly say that it is not every modern mining engineer in Canada who is capable of conducting a prolonged and technical conversation in Latin. This was just one of the many facets of Gilbert Monture's character.

I have a very special reason for speaking about him today, because not only was he a very great and illustrious Canadian, he was also a very great and illustrious member of the Mohawk tribe. He was a very notable representative of the Indian people in this country and despite his wide circle of friends and acquaintances gained through his great fame both in this country and outside, he never lost touch with his own people. He remained firmly an Indian and a Mohawk right to the end.

To go with him, as I did, on many occasions on motor trips from here to Peterborough—when we were going to meetings of the Board of Governors of Trent University—was really a liberal education. He had such a fund of knowledge, such a fund of good stories, so much wit, and he expressed it all in such terse and elegant English. I should like to mention just one or two examples of his wit.

On one occasion he was with a group of people, French Canadians and English Canadians, who got on to the subject of how long their families had been in Canada.

Some of the English-speaking people said, "Our people have been here for 200 years," and some of the French Canadians said, "Our people have been here for 300 years," and then somebody who did not know that he was an Indian turned to Dr. Monture and said, "Dr. Monture, how long has your family been in Canada?" and 'Slim', as we called him, looked up at the ceiling and said, "Oh, about 10,000 years."

Another example of his wit I got from my cousin, who got his first post-war job from Dr. Monture. He said he went into the office one day to do some filing, or something of the kind, and Dr. Monture was on the telephone, evidently to a rather stuffy civil servant who was giving him the runaround, explaining why something that ought to be done couldn't be done because of this obstacle, that obstacle and the other obstacle. Finally Dr. Monture completely lost patience and he said, "Well, I think I'll go back to the reservation; I am just tired of carrying the white man's burden."

He was a very remarkable man in every way, and he had lived to what I suppose most of us would now call not a very ripe old age. He was, and I am inclined to use the expression only, 77 when he died but he had crowded his 77 years with more achievements and more distinctions than fall to the lot of most people even in a much longer span. It is an abiding regret to me that he was never named to sit in this chamber, because he would have been an enormous asset to us. He would have added great distinction and it would have been a very suitable recognition of his achievements as a Canadian and also as a representative of his people, the Indian people of Canada. I think I forgot to mention that, among other things, he was a soldier with a distinguished record in the First World War.

I felt I could not let this occasion pass when this very distinguished man had left us without paying a small and very inadequate tribute to his immense services to the country and to his own people, the Indian people of Canada.

PENSION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-202, to amend the Pension Act.

Bill read first time.

SECOND READING

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the second time?