

Given that the government agrees with the action of the Governor of the Bank of Canada, does that indicate that there is now a floor under the Canadian dollar?

**Senator de Cotret:** Honourable senators, I shall raise that question with my colleague, the Minister of Finance, and will be happy to provide a specific answer.

## CROWN CORPORATIONS

### PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF ASSETS OF PETRO-CANADA

**Senator Austin:** Honourable senators, I should like to ask the Leader of the Government whether there is any intention on the part of the government to introduce amendments to the Petro-Canada Act in this session of Parliament.

**Senator Flynn:** The honourable senator knows the situation. No action will be taken by the government before it receives the report of the task force which is presently studying the kind of assets of Petro-Canada that might be disposed of.

**Senator Austin:** Could the Leader of the Government tell the Senate whether that task force is an official government advisory group or a party group, and whether it is being paid by the government for its services?

**Senator Flynn:** By the government.

**Senator Austin:** I wonder whether the government leader would give us in writing its terms of reference, so that we can determine whether it has been asked the principal question—Is Petro-Canada in the public interest and should it be kept in the public interest as a crown corporation?—or whether it has been asked some lesser question.

**Senator Flynn:** I will provide the honourable senator with that document.

**Senator Austin:** Will the government leader also undertake to provide us with the report of the task force as soon as it is available?

**Senator Flynn:** Yes, in due course.

**Senator Austin:** In accordance with freedom of information.

**Senator Flynn:** Yes, in accordance with.

## STATUS OF WOMEN

### ANNIVERSARY OF PRIVY COUNCIL DECISION

**Senator Quart:** Honourable senators, may I draw your attention to the fact that October 18 is a very special day for women senators, past, present and future, for it was on that day 50 years ago that women became persons in the eyes of the law and were eligible to be appointed to the Senate of Canada.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Quart:** It might be apropos to refresh our memories as to how and when women were first admitted to the Senate.

In fact, every woman senator owes a debt of gratitude to five public-spirited women from Alberta. They are Mrs. Emily Murphy, Mrs. Nellie McClung, Mrs. Louise McKinney, Mrs. H. M. Edwards and the Honourable Irene Paribby.

Those five women, after years of sacrifice and struggle, and after having had their pleas rejected by the Canadian Parliament, presented their case to the Supreme Court of Canada and lost. However, undaunted, they carried their case before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, in London, England, stating their argument that Canadian women be considered as "persons" in the eyes of the law and, as such, be eligible for appointment to the Senate of Canada.

The vital question was debated pro and con as to whether women were "persons" under the terms of the B.N.A. Act of 1867. The case was heard in July 1929. After convincing argument and anxious consideration, their lordships found that the word "persons" included both men and women, and from that time on women, as "persons," were eligible to be appointed to the Senate of Canada.

It was a great victory for those five women, for the decision of the Privy Council in England reversed the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada.

The struggle commenced in 1916, and those five women battled all obstacles for 13 long years before achieving their goal. I am sure they must be chuckling with glee from their heavenly abode because, after all these years, a woman from Alberta has been appointed to the Senate of Canada. I refer to the Honourable Martha Bielish.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Quart:** It is interesting to note what started those five women on the warpath. It was not a case of "Cherchez la femme," but "Cherchez l'homme," for on July 1, 1915, which was Justice Murphy's first day on the bench of the magistrate's court in Edmonton, Alberta, the defence counsel, Mr. Eardley Jackson, enraged at the stiff sentence meted out to his client, objected and rudely told her that she was not eligible to sit as a judge as she was not a "person" in the eyes of the law.

The Supreme Court of Alberta supported the decision of Justice Murphy, and it was the spark that lit the fire that launched those five women on their campaign. I repeat, that incident was the match that lit the flame that sparked the campaign to change the B.N.A. Act so that women might be considered "persons" in the eyes of the law. Next week, at various places in Canada, there will be celebrations marking the anniversary of that wonderful event.

• (1630)

## SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

### MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of His Excellency the Governor General's Speech at the opening of the session.

**Senator Bielish** moved:

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General of Canada: