

THE SENATE

Monday, May 19, 1958

The Senate met at 8 p.m., the Hon. Arthur M. Pearson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair.

Prayers.

Routine proceedings.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

DISTRIBUTION TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT—
QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

On the Orders of the Day:

Hon. Thomas Reid: Honourable senators, I rise on a question of privilege affecting honourable members of Parliament, and particularly the honourable members of this chamber. Since 1930, when I came to Ottawa as a member of the House of Commons, members of Parliament have been sent various Government publications, and if any further are required all one has to do is write the Queen's Printer. After all, we represent sections of the people in the province from which we come, and I think most honourable members will agree with me that to carry out our duties successfully we require certain informative bulletins which are issued from time to time by the Government. Of late, when lists have been sent out from the printing bureau, we have been asked, if we were interested in any of the publications listed, to mark the list and send for them. I had occasion to send for three, one of which, having to do with fisheries, I particularly wanted. I have been informed by the Queen's Printer, and I suppose every other honourable senator has been similarly informed, that I cannot have these publications unless I pay for them. Let no one say that I do not want to pay for them because I happen to have been born in Scotland. I am raising this question of privilege entirely on principle. It may happen that when one of these lists is received by some honourable senator he may be absent from home—out of town or perhaps in hospital. Because one does not put a mark in front of items on the list, and return it, is a member of Parliament now to be denied the bulletins he requires?

I know it may be argued that this practice is adopted for reasons of economy. But how can one be violating the idea of economy if 500 to 5,000 copies of a certain bulletin are lying down at the Printing Bureau and as a member of Parliament—a member of the Senate or the House of Commons—you write and ask for a copy? Yet you are told you must pay for it because you did not put a little cross opposite the name of the

bulletin on the list of publications a few days before or after the publication or bulletin was issued by the Queen's Printer. I am protesting with all seriousness against this practice, for I can see the time when we will perhaps have to take off our hats every time we go into some of these government offices. We could in time become mere puppets. Many of the new honourable senators may not realize what I am fighting for but, after all, as senators and members of Parliament we have a place in this country's affairs and have certain duties to perform, and we cannot always perform them successfully unless we have access to some of these bulletins and publications. Last Tuesday I asked when we might expect to receive a copy of the Gordon Commission's Report, and the honourable Leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Aseltine) was good enough to send me his copy. In the meantime I had sent to the Queen's Printer for a copy of this report and, lo and behold, I got it on Friday. I am wondering why they didn't say to me, "You have no right to have it. You should pay for it because you didn't mark a cross before the name of the report when the list was issued."

Honourable senators, I am placing this matter before the Leader of the Government to tell him that the rights of members of Parliament are being encroached upon. This is a far more unfair ruling than the one made last year regarding stationery, for many of us can get along with little stationery. But it is a different matter when you come to publications printed by the Queen's Printer, which contain information that should be available to us so that we may be able to pass it on to the people in our ridings or districts. We might get a list and see some document that we do not wish to have at the moment, but perhaps three weeks later someone living in our riding or province may write and ask a certain question regarding it. Then we write to the Printing Bureau and are told, not by the Government, but by an official, that we cannot have it unless we pay for it. I am protesting as strongly as I can, and ask if we cannot go back to the old plan which has existed ever since I came here, whereby when senators want a document they can send for it and obtain it. If a bulletin or document were out of print, I do not think anyone would protest and ask for it to be re-printed. I am sure that if the Printing Bureau said they were sorry, that a document was out of print, that explanation would be accepted. But when there are hundreds and thousands of copies down there, and they say, "You cannot have it unless you pay for it", I say that we should not stand for that.