

THE SENATE

Thursday, February 21, 1985

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Honourable Rhéal Bélisle, Acting Speaker, in the Chair.

Prayers

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

ADJOURNMENT MOTION

Hon. Orville H. Phillips: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(g), I move:

That when the Senate adjourns today, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday next, 26th February, 1985, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I am in a peculiar position, in that I should have spoken to my colleague before.

I think it would be advantageous to postpone the presentation of this motion until after we have had the vote on the principal matter before us with respect to Bill C-11. Therefore, I believe the question should be put later this day.

[Translation]

BORROWING AUTHORITY BILL, 1984-85, (No. 2)

MOTION TO INSTRUCT NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE TO REPORT NEGATIVELY

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Roblin, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Flynn, P.C.:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be instructed to report Bill C-11, intituled: "An Act to provide borrowing authority", later this day.—
(Honourable Senator Corbin).

Hon. Eymard Corbin: Honourable senators, before moving adjournment of the debate yesterday evening, I briefly referred to several comments made in articles that appeared in the newspaper *Le Devoir* which were full of mistaken notions about our parliamentary tradition. I shall not comment further on the sages of St. Sacrement. I had reached the conclusion that this chamber, as a matter of principle and for very fundamental reasons arising from the historical development of the Canadian parliamentary system—representation and responsibility—should not grant the government borrowing authority until the government complies with established parliamentary practice.

What we are seeing here is an unprecedented parliamentary strategy being used by the government, as Senator Stewart

explained so admirably yesterday. That is the whole point, no more and no less.

We on the Liberal side, despite threats and a form of blackmail, have remained firm. Our position is that we must protect the government against its own excesses and insist, across the board, on the government's obligation to be accountable to Parliament.

Our actions have a constitutional background. They are based on the concept that both houses of Parliament have a right to examine requests made by the Crown.

[English]

It goes back to the Magna Carta. It is as simple as that. Just for the heck of it, I thought I should take a peek into past debates of the Senate to find out what some of the government members of today said when they were in opposition. I must admit that it was a pretty depressing exercise to have to go through some of those speeches, but nevertheless I survived. I could not believe my eyes at what I read. For example, at page 4377 in the debate on the Borrowing Authority Bill, 1982-83, which at that time was Bill C-111 and the bill was in the second reading stage, Senator Doody said:

If the Parliament of Canada—

He did not say "the Senate." I repeat:

If the Parliament of Canada is not to have control of the public purse, then dismiss it, send it home, and forget this farce completely, because control of the public purse is by far the most important function of the parliamentary system, as is avowed.

He said "the parliamentary system". He did not distinguish between the House of Commons and the Senate.

We are part of the whole process, the total system, are we not, honourable senators; and where is Senator Doody now that we need him?

Honourable senators, I found another relevant morsel of parliamentary wisdom and respect for the system of parliamentary control in *Senate Debates* of July 29, 1982, at page 4735, which is Appendix "A", a report of the National Finance Committee to the Senate on the subject matter of, at that time, Bill C-125 to provide supplementary borrowing authority. One may well wonder why the current government, if it was in such dire need of borrowing authority last fall, did not refer that subject matter to the National Finance Committee at the time. All members of this house would have had ample opportunity to find an acceptable, an honourable, compromise in the best of parliamentary traditions. But, no, the bill was dragged on in the other place until the very eve of adjournment for Christmas. We were all sent home for some