

*Canadian Organization Act, Atlantic Canada, 1987*

● (1120)

First, on the question of whether this was common practice, the Speaker said:

I have been unable to find any instance in our practice where the Senate divided a Commons Bill or where the Commons has divided a Senate Bill.

The Speaker pointed out that there was one precedent for consolidation of two Commons Bills into a single legislative measure by the Senate which took place on June 11, 1941 with a message from the Senate to the House asking for concurrence. The Commons agreed with the Senate's proposal waiving its traditional privilege, and a single Bill was eventually given Royal Assent. Mr. Speaker went on to state that concurrence was specifically sought by the Senate.

The message received last Friday was not one of seeking the Commons consent but one of saying, "We have done it. Tough luck". In our opinion the Senate should have respected the propriety of the original Bill and asked if we would concur in the splitting of that Bill. That is the one part of the argument which the Speaker of the Senate made and which the Chair made in its ruling.

The other part is under Standing Order 87, namely, the question as to who controls the spending of taxpayers' money. Our Standing Order reads:

All aids and supplies granted to the Sovereign by the Parliament of Canada are the sole gift of the House of Commons, and all Bills for granting such aids and supplies ought to begin with the House, as it is the undoubted right of the House to direct, limit, and appoint in all such bills, the ends, purposes, considerations, conditions, limitations and qualifications of such grants, which are not alterable by the Senate.

The Speaker went on to say something that I have not heard in my nine years here. The Chair said:

I have ruled that the privileges of the House have been infringed . . . The cure in this case is for the House to claim its privileges or to forgo them, if it so wishes, by way of a message to Their Honours informing them accordingly.

I want to state unequivocally on behalf of the Government, and I hope all Members of this House of Commons, that we are claiming our privileges, the privileges traditionally granted to elected representatives over appointed representatives. As I said when the message originally came back, this action is an affront to Atlantic Canadians. It has been two months since the Bill passed the House of Commons. By dividing this Bill the Liberals have ensured that further delay will result before it is enacted in its entirety.

I want to go into some detail as to why it is important that Bill C-103 be passed, complete, in its original form, not just for the procedural purposes but for Atlantic Canada.

**Mr. Robichaud:** Why complete?

**Mr. Lewis:** Just hang on, my friend. Let me quote some of numbers. We want to demonstrate to Atlantic Canada that we feel that the decision-making authority ought to be given to Atlantic Canada to direct its own future. We have had years of mismanagement from the Liberal Party with local authority

being refused and all decisions being made in Ottawa. If my friend from New Brunswick wants to continue the practice of all decisions being made in Ottawa, let him take the floor and state that for his people back home. Even his colleague is not in favour of that.

We want Atlantic Canada to know that Parliament and this Government feels that it should be treated the same as western Canada. Atlantic Canadians know that we have passed the Western Diversification Fund, that it is in full operation and not being held up by the whims of one Senator. It is in full operation.

**Mr. Robichaud:** Full operation?

**Mr. Lewis:** Let us look at what this authority has done. We have interim authority, certainly. But we want to give full and final authority to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Let us run through what this program has meant to Atlantic Canada so far.

The program has solicited in the region from February 15, 1988 to May 30, 1988, 2,886 applications, 643 of which have been approved for a total contribution of \$58 million, making possible over \$209 million worth of investment in Atlantic Canada. During the month of May alone, 917 new applications were received by ACOA as compared to 304 in the previous year under the old programs left by the Liberal Government. Look at that increase, Mr. Speaker. That is why we want ACOA for Atlantic Canada.

Furthermore, during the same period, 306 applications were approved under ACOA as compared to 144 under the same program in 1987. We have some 1,900 active applications. There is a great deal of interest in this program in Atlantic Canada and that is why we want to pass this Bill to try to meet the needs of Atlantic Canada.

This legislation will give the ACOA Minister and the agency more flexibility; it will give it decision-making in the region; ACOA will be able to participate in co-financing of regionally advantageous projects with other Departments. ACOA will help the newly established designated areas of exceptional opportunity and it will help harness federal programs to the common goal of increasing opportunity for economic development in Atlantic Canada. But, and here is the but, should Bill C-103 be allowed to die, as my friend from New Brunswick wants it to do—he wants to go back home with that on his record. He will have to answer as to what he did in his four years in Parliament. He will have to answer that Atlantic Canada did not get any opportunities. I tell him to put that on the record.

**Mr. Robichaud:** What about your responsibilities?

**Mr. Lewis:** I ask him to stand up and state firmly where he stands. He should tell the people that he does not want this Bill to pass.

**Mr. Robichaud:** You don't want it to pass.