

capacity. There were exchanges on how the opposition parties would be funded, whether they were likely to unite in presenting candidates, what the leanings within each group were, what date these parties would like to see set for the elections, and how substantial the platforms and programs of each of these parties were.

The alternative groups' answers to these questions were, in some cases, rather tentative, because, as Dr. Szurös, President of the Assembly, pointed out during my meeting with him, the most important task for the National Assembly then was to enact the reforming legislation. He estimated that between 20 and 30 new laws had to be enacted, including amendments to certain laws. The assembly had already approved the first draft of the new Constitution. Also, the negotiations with the alternative parties had only just started prior to my meeting with Dr. Szurös, so it was premature to try to pronounce on how exactly the new system would work. Dr. Szurös estimated that agreement between the parties might be reached by mid-summer. In fact, agreement was reached in September. He hoped that Hungary's passage to democracy would take place in an atmosphere of calm. I assure him that Canadian parliamentarians and Canadians in general shared that hope and wished Hungary well in that historic endeavour.

[Translation]

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, if no other honourable senator wishes to speak, this inquiry is considered debated.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BILL C-21

MOTION RE DEADLINE FOR PRESENTATION OF REPORT
WITHOUT AMENDMENT NEGATIVED

Hon. Jacques Flynn, pursuant to a notice given earlier this day, moved:

That the Senate convey to the Special Committee to which Bill C-21 has been referred, the following message: (a) to report Bill C-21 without amendment no later than January 4, 1990; and (b) to pursue, if it so desires, its study of the subject-matter of the said Bill and to report its observations and recommendations to the Senate in due course.

He said: Honourable Senators, I seek the Senate's leave to immediately move the motion of which I gave notice earlier today. If explanations are required, I can give them now.

The reason I asked the Senate to consider this motion is that Bill S-12 which the Senate adopted yesterday was defeated this afternoon on first reading in the House of Commons.

One has a right to one's own opinion, but under the circumstances, my motion becomes an alternative.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable Senators, we may dispose of it today.

Senator Flynn: As you wish.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable Senators, Honourable Senator Flynn, seconded by Honourable Senator Doody, moved:

[Senator Charbonneau.]

That the Senate convey to the Special Committee to which Bill C-21 has been referred, the following message: (a) to report Bill C-21 without amendment no later than January 4, 1990; and (b) to pursue, if it so desires, its study of the subject-matter of the said Bill and to report its observations and recommendations to the Senate in due course.

Is it your pleasure, Honourable Senators, to adopt the motion?

Senator Flynn: Honourable Senators, it will not be necessary to detain you much longer, for the subject matter of this motion was implicitly debated yesterday, if not explicitly, when we dealt with Bill S-12 which as I said, met an insurmountable obstacle when it reached the House of Commons.

The government leader in the House of Commons objected to first reading of this bill because it was out of order. A division was held on first reading of the motion and the bill was defeated by 131 votes to 87. In short, the members on the government side opposed the bill on first reading and the members on the opposition side, including the NDP, voted in favour.

Under the circumstances, the remedies which according to Senator MacEachen were in this bill, supposing they existed, could not be applied.

If Bill C-21 is not passed before January 6, as he explained yesterday, a number of benefits provided under this legislation will not be available to claimants, which will have adverse consequences for quite a few people.

If Bill C-21 could be amended by the committee, we could always say: The committee can take as long as it needs to improve the bill. However, the committee cannot make any changes of a financial nature, such as increasing benefits. I think everyone realizes that.

Senator MacEachen said as much yesterday when he tabled Bill S-12. He said that, normally, the House of Commons had to agree to validate, as it were, his proposal by obtaining a recommendation from the Governor General, the royal recommendation. Furthermore, the bill had to be completed by the passage of the section printed in italics in Bill S-12.

Considering that the special committee is constitutionally powerless, I think that the best thing for the committee to do is to report this bill, without amendments, and in time for Royal Assent, before January 6. That is why I said in my proposal that the committee should report on Bill C-21 by January 4 at the latest. Of course we have no objection to an earlier date, and tomorrow would be just fine. My point is that tabling the report by January 4 would mean that the bill could receive Royal Assent on that date. It could also become effective immediately, the same day, in time for January 6, which technically is the date on which the provisions mentioned by Senator MacEachen yesterday could be in effect.

The special committee has now prepared a program for hearing witnesses. We are not going to tell the committee to stop hearing these witnesses and to stop considering the bill, because there is no objection to the committee making com-