

Last night I watched a program on television called *Front Page Challenge*. Everybody knows that program. One of the interviewees was Premier Angus MacLean. He was chastised by the panel, in the persons of Pierre Berton, Betty Kennedy, Gordon Sinclair and Paul Hellyer, of all people. Paul Hellyer said, "The action you are taking is just atrocious," or something to that effect. They ridiculed the action of Premier MacLean in challenging in court the action taken at the moment by the government on what is not even law. I think it is ridiculous.

● (2020)

In my view, it is a good move to extend the time to February 6, but there has to be a deadline somewhere. Everybody who has a voice can be heard between now and February 6; everybody who represents a group of people can be heard between now and February 6. I repeat that I welcome this move, but any extension of this new date would be in effect saying that we have been working on this for 53 years—

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, no.

Senator Robichaud: Well, you may say 60 years, you may say 30 years, or you may say from 1960—anybody can select his own date, but the fact remains that we have to have a deadline, and the government of the day, with the consent of honourable senators serving on the committee, agreed that it should be extended to February 6. As I have said, I welcome this, but I do not think the date should be extended beyond February 6.

Senator Donahoe: Will the honourable senator permit a question? Is it not true that in the course of the program about which he spoke, when Pierre Berton charged Premier MacLean that the premiers had been unable to reach unanimity, he received the answer, "We had the unanimity of ten premiers, and the only one who would not agree was the Prime Minister of Canada." And did he not say, in effect, that everybody was out of step except Johnny, so everybody had to change step in order to get in line with the views of the federal government. Is that not what was said on that program?

Senator Robichaud: Honourable senators, yes. That is what was actually said on television, but it was not true. I do not want to get into a debate right now, but it is true that he said that, but what he said was not true.

Senator Asselin: How come you know that?

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I do not really want to stop this interesting review of last night's TV program—I am sorry; I did not realize Senator Smith was on his feet.

Senator Smith: Honourable senators, I want to know if my old friend and colleague from New Brunswick, Senator Robichaud, would allow me to ask a question. Is he advocating that we should accept the view that government by television is the way in which we should run the affairs of this country to the extent that we have the power to do so.

Senator Robichaud: No. I say, in answer to that silly question, that it is not my view that government should be controlled by television.

Senator Smith: You gave me a silly answer.

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, as mover of the motion, I point out that I do not have the advantage that Senator Roblin has of being a member of the committee, but I thank him for his report indicating that there are a number of things—

Hon. Henry D. Hicks: Are you closing the debate? I wanted to speak to the motion.

Senator Frith: I am sorry.

Senator Hicks: Honourable senators, there is a motion before the house. Usually I find myself in agreement with my friend, Senator Robichaud, the former Premier of New Brunswick, but this time I don't. I want it clearly understood that if I support this motion, which I intend to do, I am in no way saying that I would not entertain a motion at some future date for a further extension of the work of this committee.

● (2025)

I think it is impossible at this time to determine that we will have properly heard the people of Canada, who are legitimately interested in this important matter, by any specific date. I felt from the beginning that it was unrealistic to have a target of December 9. It seems to me that February 6 may be reasonable. I certainly hope it will be and that the work can be done by then. If it cannot, I would not want my support of this motion now to be taken as an indication that I would not entertain a motion for a further extension of the date if that seemed necessary.

Senator Frith: To continue briefly, honourable senators, I want first to thank Senator Roblin, a member of the committee, for giving us some perspective of the increased opportunities for study this extension will afford.

Secondly, I want to thank Senator Roblin for his implied support for the proposition that the government always keeps an open mind and pays very close attention to suggestions made by the opposition, as it has in this case, by accepting, specifically, the date proposed by the opposition.

Thirdly, I want to thank Senator Smith and Senator Donahoe for drawing to our notice that if we had been paying any attention to the procedures and activities of this committee, we would not be under any illusion that, when the Conservative Party supports this extension to February 6, we will hear no more from them on the point. We are under no such illusion.

Senator Flynn: You forgot to thank Senator Robichaud.

Senator Frith: I thought I would leave that to you. I thanked him for the TV review.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.
Motion agreed to.