

I see that today a report was tabled, the first one, and I am sure it will be discussed for quite some time. The report was respectfully submitted by the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, Senator Jacques Hébert, who proposed that Senator Ottenheimer be appointed as Speaker *pro tempore*. So far, there have been no objections, and I did not hear any. I do not know what happened, but you live and learn! Therefore, we accepted this appointment.

Therefore, without any consultation — there is such a thing as independent senators! The Leader of the Government in the Senate said so yesterday. Today I was very sorry to hear about the departure of my esteemed colleague Senator Everett. However, the fact remains that independent senators do exist. The fact remains that some independent senators may have some useful expertise.

[English]

I was the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, unable to get anything else. However, I have been told, and such is written, that for close to 10 years in the House of Commons I was a good chairman of the Foreign Affairs and National Defence Committee, and yet I am now unable to participate in the deliberations. Thank goodness this summer I learned the rules and I know how I will participate. But this is not the way I intended to participate, and I submit that very humbly to you, Your Honour.

Yesterday, Senator Fairbairn, someone I can call a lady, like my father would have, said that surely an independent senator counts — even though in the French translation it was just the contrary; but that is not what Senator Fairbairn said. I have to be so careful here, and I have to read both versions. However, when translated into French, that is not what she said, but it is what she did say that counts. Senator Lynch-Staunton, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, also said that independent senators count.

With respect to the list that I see today, I did not consult with the Honourable Senators Lawson, Pitfield, Lang or Everett, whose sad departure today I regret. No. In fact, I have to beg for information from various people around me, because they say that independent senators are under the jurisdiction of the chairmen, the senators responsible for committees, or the whip of the government. Surely the ones responsible for us should at least talk to us.

I regret to say that I was totally unaware of this committee report. I was not asked if I was interested in participating, or perhaps in offering, humbly, some views; they might not be shared, but at least I should have been able to submit them. I do not intend to stay in a corner and do nothing; I assure honourable senators of that.

I accepted the invitation of the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney — and I mention his name, even if some people think his name should no longer be mentioned. When he asked me if I wanted to come to the Senate, I said “Yes.” I have much respect for all of the Prime Ministers, from Mr. Pearson to Ms Campbell, whom I have served loyally and faithfully, including the one I served the longest, the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

I do not intend to be left out of events in this institution. If honourable senators want to have a harmonious Senate, as I have always begged all of my colleagues to make it, we have a duty, honourable senators, to show respect for our institution.

[Translation]

The Senate must show a great deal of civility. In fact the word “civility” exists in the vocabulary and the dictionary! I am one of those who believe in it.

[English]

I sat long enough in the House of Commons to know that the British Parliamentary system is the best of all systems, and that the Senate has a role to play while the country is under attack.

I did not answer questions asked by the press last summer which suggested that I was to become the leader of a certain party in the opposition. Some were playing games. I said nothing, and because I said nothing people interpreted my silence in their own way. My father taught me a good lesson, that you do not answer every question you are asked, and in that I imitated the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau — which is also a name I am not afraid to mention. He never wasted his energy or his time in answering “pissy” criticisms in every little journalist’s report. Excuse me for expressing myself that way, but I get carried away in English, which is not my first language, as honourable senators will realise.

[Translation]

Therefore, Your Honour, I respectfully submit to you that after looking at the list of senators, I will have to become someone that I do not want to be: that is, a dissident in the Senate.

[English]

Treat a minority well and a minority will act very well: that fact has a long, long history in Canada.

[Translation]

Scorn the minorities and they will act as minorities!

[English]

I do not intend to remain silent. I have kept my silence since I arrived in the Senate. Many events — sad events — have taken place since I arrived here. Who was I to disturb? Nobody. I am only one of you and, very humbly, one of the last one of you, and I submit to that.

However, I intend to do a lot for my country, and while the country is under attack is not the time for cheap shots between senators. I intend to devote my full time to the Senate for the salary I earn. I said that to the press. Like Senator MacEachen and many others, we do not touch double-dipping. I cannot speak for the other independent senators, or for those still to come. However, surely we have a role to play in this noble institution. We must have a protector. And you, sir —