

until the Senate returned. In that way we could better prepare for the trip, which we, in fact, took last weekend.

On that trip things went generally well. I am not sure that the Liberals received all the public support and excitement that they were looking for, but—

**An Hon. Senator:** You got a nice picture in the paper!

**Senator Simard:**—I must say, on my own behalf, that it was pleasant to meet the people in Canso. As we said last week while in Canso, we could have gone there last November had we been given the authority to travel at that time.

Therefore, in my opinion, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate owes this house an explanation. I remember he was sitting in his seat next to Senator Frith when this same commitment was made on three separate occasions. Senator Frith is one of those who insist that everything be done properly, and I agree with him. He is wary of setting precedents, and I too feel that we should be careful of what type of precedents we set.

If we had known in time, perhaps other senators would have liked to go to the Maritimes with the committee in order to see matters for themselves.

Honourable senators, that is my question of privilege. I do not think this is any way to run a business.

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, if I may, I shall make a comment or two on the question of privilege in the absence of Senator Frith. However, before I do so I want to congratulate the members of the special committee who have undertaken such a heavy burden of work during the recess. The special committee has met almost continuously in Ottawa since January 3 and has just completed a very exhausting weekend in St. John's, Newfoundland, and Canso, Nova Scotia.

I believe all members of the committee, including Senator Simard, deserve our thanks for the work they have done.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

• (1410)

**Senator MacEachen:** I have read the extract to which Senator Simard has referred and I believe he has quoted Senator Frith accurately. Senator Frith stated that the committee would have to come to the house to get permission to travel. That particular debate took place under the heading, "Unemployment Insurance Act, Employment and Immigration Department and Commission Act; Second Report of Special Committee Presented and Adopted."

In the appendix of the *Debates of the Senate* of that day, at page 1006, honourable senators will find the second report in which it says, "Your Committee, which was authorized by the Senate . . . to study and report on the Bill C21 . . . respectfully requests that it be empowered to adjourn from place to place within Canada." That report was adopted, as I understand it, or unless I have missed something, on December 21. There may be an apparent inconsistency between what Senator Frith said and the Senate report, but it is pretty clear that the

[Senator Simard.]

committee asked for permission to adjourn from place to place within Canada and that the Senate granted that request.

I suppose one could argue, technically, that when Senator Frith was speaking the report had not been approved and that therefore the committee had not come to the Senate for permission. However, regardless of what Senator Frith said, the Senate, that very day, authorized the committee to adjourn from place to place within Canada.

I am aware that the point was raised in the committee. I believe that the chairman of the committee ruled that the committee was functioning legitimately in traveling to St. John's and Canso and he indicated that he had received advice to that effect. I am sure that Senator Frith had no intention of deceiving anyone. Quite apart from what he may have said in anticipation of the action of the Senate, the fact is that the Senate approved the motion on the report and, in so doing, empowered the committee to move from place to place in Canada.

**An Hon. Senator:** That's pretty weak.

**Senator MacEachen:** It is pretty clear that the committee received the authority from the Senate. In any event, that technical point becomes relatively unimportant in light of the tremendous work the committee did in the Atlantic provinces, and to which Senator Simard contributed so immensely in the final stages when he seemed to agree that amendments to Bill C21 were needed. That justifies the travel at any time.

**Senator Simard:** Honourable senators, I shall not attack the press; I leave that to Senator Thériault and the Liberal members of the committee. The press can write what it wants. If someone wants to take comfort in the fact that the press quoted me as saying that I might consider amendments, I said the same thing in Ottawa last week. I explained by saying that compassion is not always on the Liberal side, that we Tories in the past, having listened to people and having verified the worst scenario through the figures or whatever, have gone on to discuss the matter with ministers and departmental officials. In the past this government has accepted changes, and it is in that spirit that I said we would continue to verify and question. If the consequences of this bill could possibly be as bad as was suggested, we would seek support for changes.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

**Senator Simard:** I believe I was quoted correctly as having said that it would be a tragedy if the Liberals kept up their partisanship and killed this bill. I was also quoted correctly as having said that I would urge the Liberals to pass this bill so that people in Canso and in other places would not be penalized by having to meet the requirement of 14 weeks as opposed to 10 weeks. I think the press, generally, is doing a good job.

**Hon. Orville H. Phillips:** Honourable senators, I listened with interest to the explanation given by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I would suggest that the matter be delayed until Senator Frith returns from Florida and can give his own explanation. A delay might also help him out with his tennis elbow, which I am sure he is presently developing. I suggest, therefore, that this matter be delayed until he returns.