

THE SENATE

Wednesday, December 1, 1982

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.
Prayers.

HEALTH, WELFARE AND SCIENCE

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO RECEIVE PRESENTATION FROM
INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA

Hon. M. Lorne Bonnell: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(e), I move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science, in response to a request from the Indian Association of Alberta, be authorized to receive a presentation from representatives of that association, and from other organizations if they so request, with respect to certain issues relating to Indian women and the Indian Act and, if the Committee considers it necessary, to report thereon.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, may I ask a question of the chairman of the committee? As I heard him propose the motion, he said that the committee would report to the Senate only if it deemed it advisable to do so. Is that usual? My prejudice would be to ask the committee to report in any event because, if the committee is meeting pursuant to an order from us, and even if it has nothing to report, we should really hear the conclusions of the committee rather than let the matter hang in mid-air.

Senator Bonnell: Honourable senators, I agree with my honourable friend and I will draw his view to the attention of the committee. However, because a group of Indian women from the Indian Association of Alberta asked to spend 20 to 30 minutes with us in committee, I did want to give them an opportunity of presenting their claims. My intention was to report on what they said, if I thought it was worthwhile, but in view of what Senator Roblin has said I will report to the Senate in any event.

Senator Roblin: I thank my honourable friend for his undertaking, and in view of that I will not suggest that he amend his motion. Personally, I should like to know the committee's view on the matter, because the problem of Indian women concerns people right across the country—and it certainly concerns me, coming from the province of Manitoba.

I take it, then, that we can expect the committee to report regardless of their terms of reference?

Senator Bonnell: Honourable senators, perhaps I should add that all honourable senators are invited to attend the committee meeting. I hope my honourable friend will come and hear their views firsthand, and perhaps ask pertinent questions.

Senator Roblin: If my honourable friend will undertake to hold his committee meeting when other committees of which I am a member are not meeting, I will be glad to give his proposition some consideration. But I must say that I have certain confidence in his own common sense in the matter, and I look forward to hearing his report.

Motion agreed to.

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

STATEMENT BY SENATOR FLYNN

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I want to raise a question of personal privilege, first of all regarding a statement made by the Prime Minister yesterday at his press conference, when he said, concerning the Hambleton case, that the decision not to prosecute this gentleman had been made by the Conservative government and the then Minister of Justice.

I must say the Prime Minister was very poorly informed. In fact, he was also contradicting statements made in the House of Commons by the Solicitor General and by the former Minister of Justice, Mr. Chrétien. In fact, there was a preliminary report in January 1980, when a more thorough investigation was requested. The report was submitted to my successor after the 1980 election, and the decision not to prosecute Mr. Hambleton was made in April 1980, not by Mr. Clark's Conservative government or by his Minister of Justice, but by the Trudeau government and Mr. Chrétien.

In the second place, yesterday on the French television network, Radio-Canada, they said I had informed Mr. Hambleton in January that he would not be prosecuted. Obviously this is absolutely untrue and even ridiculous, and I must object to this statement. In any case, both this statement and the Prime Minister's are at variance with the facts.