

Leader of the Government in the Senate had to make a decision regarding the use of our chamber by outside organizations.

If the adjournment is from a Thursday to the following Tuesday, it is sometimes possible, to accommodate certain international associations; but we have to keep in mind that the Senate may be called at any time to sit from Monday to Saturday to give immediate consideration to important measures from the House of Commons. That is why, in such circumstances, whenever we receive a request to use this chamber for meetings of an international character, if an affirmative reply could be given it has always been done with certain reservations. International associations concerned have been asked to find alternative meeting places in case the Senate should be called to sit at the time scheduled for such meetings.

This having been said, I now wish to inform the Senate that the International Association of French-Speaking Parliamentarians asked permission a short time ago to use the Senate chamber for the inaugural ceremonies of its Third Annual Meeting tomorrow, Friday, September 17, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

There has been no firm commitment in that connection either by His Honour the Speaker or by the Government Leader because there was a possibility of the Senate meeting at that particular time to consider certain government measures from the Commons. It now appears that we will not be receiving that legislation immediately.

Although the association of French-speaking parliamentarians would have been able to meet at some place other than the Senate had our chamber not been available, I think we all understand that it is preferable that they should meet in this chamber. It is the practice for all countries to make their legislative chambers available for interparliamentary association meetings.

I am placing these facts before honourable senators for their consideration. If there are no objections to the use of the chamber by the aforementioned association, it will be informed accordingly.

May I suggest that the Internal Economy Committee look into the possibility of establishing a definite procedure concerning use of this chamber by international organizations or for other purposes, and report to this chamber accordingly.

In closing may I quote from the speech delivered in the Senate by the honourable Senator Roebuck on March 19, 1969, regarding the use of the Senate Chamber by committees:

Honourable senators, there are many precedents for the use of the chamber for purposes other than sittings of the Senate itself. For as long as I can remember we have had meetings in this chamber of such bodies as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Federal-Provincial conferences, and very soon I understand there is to be a meeting of the Speakers of all the legislative bodies of the Commonwealth. They will be accommodated in this chamber and entertained here. I am sure they will go away with a much better impression than if they

were received in any other place in Ottawa or, for that matter, in all of Canada.

If there is any comment with respect to the statement I have just made, I am sure we would all like to hear it now; otherwise I should like to deal with the program for the next few days.

Hon. John J. Connolly: If honourable Senator McDonald does not mind my saying so, I think we should consider seriously the business of allowing this chamber to be used for non-legislative purposes, regardless of the fact that on other occasions it has been done. It may be fine to allow such use for parliamentary purposes, but I draw to the attention of the Senate the type of experience that I am sure all of us have had in other countries. I can remember a meeting of the NATO parliamentarians in Washington some years ago. It is now called the North Atlantic Assembly. That is the body that is meeting here. But we did not meet in the Capitol. We did not meet in the Senate chamber or in the House chamber. We met in a splendidly-appointed room which had all the facilities necessary. There was a loud-speaker system and I think a translation system. Indeed, the facilities were completely adequate.

Now, I submit that we have such facilities here in Ottawa, other than the Senate chamber. We have the Railway Committee Room, for example, which was well refurbished when the present Governor General was Speaker of the House of Commons. Good translation and microphonic facilities can be installed in that room quite easily. We also have the large and rather ornate room in the West Block in which recent federal-provincial meetings have been held. Representatives of the Council of Europe were received there last winter. The facilities there are extremely good. In addition to that we also have in the old Union Station a facility that is used by federal-provincial meetings as well as by ministerial meetings. All of these are very good facilities.

I must say that I have been caught a bit by surprise by the suggestion from Senator McDonald that we should hear views now. But, regardless of not being any better advised than I am, after listening to what Senator McDonald has had to say I should think the use of this chamber by anybody but the Senate should be allowed only in very exceptional circumstances. If it is allowed, it should be only as a very exceptional case.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): I am not prepared to judge or to say what those cases of exception should be. In my opinion the Speaker and the leaders should be the ones to decide that, and it should be up to them to consult others as to what steps should be taken.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, since honourable Senator Connolly (Ottawa West) has made reference to intervention by the Speaker in a case of this kind, I should like to inform the Senate that I have looked at the precedents and I have failed to find any clear policy for dealing with situations of this kind. Per-

[Hon. Mr. McDonald.]