

THE SENATE

Thursday, November 23, 1995

The Senate met at 2:00 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair

Prayers.

VISITORS IN GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I draw your attention to distinguished visitors in our Speaker's Gallery. I refer to the Honourable Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Speaker Louise M. Dacquay. She is accompanied by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Mr. Binks Remnant.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

CONSEQUENCES FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk: Honourable senators, yesterday I abstained from the final vote on Bill C-68. I did so because I respect the Constitution and because the bill remained unchanged. Therefore, abstention was my only method of registering my continued concerns.

The bill, contrary to popular opinion, belief and the government hype, does not get tough on crime immediately, but it does get tough on lawful citizens. If the bill were really tough on crime, I might have had some reason and logic for putting aside my responsibilities to the aboriginal peoples in favour of its passage. I might have been able to put the interests of minorities aside. However, the bill did not, in fact, deal with the issues of crime and violence with which I feel we need to deal.

The Senate must now contemplate how committed it is to the aboriginal community. How committed are we to minorities, one of our three fundamental responsibilities? Of what value is the aboriginal community? Does the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs really deal only with legal and constitutional issues?

Honourable senators, before we face such a situation again, we should reflect on our respective roles and renew our commitment to finding workable compromises.

Hon. Willie Adams: Honourable senators, I wish to explain why I abstained last night on the vote on Bill C-68.

During the debate on this bill, we heard many speeches expressing concern for aboriginal peoples, their rights and their

way of life. Following those speeches, 64 senators voted for Bill C-68.

Over the past several months, we heard from approximately 160 witnesses, and we heard consistently that the aboriginal peoples will have to go to court if Bill C-68 is passed. I believe that that is the only way we will win our rights back, and I believe that we will be in court some time after Christmas.

I have been serving on the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples for the last two years, and I have always thought that we were doing a good job. However, after last night, I realized that the Senate is not concerned about aboriginal rights.

Effective immediately, I tender to my whip my resignation as a member of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF FRENCH-SPEAKING PARLIAMENTARIANS

EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND SEMINAR HELD IN PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

Hon. Jean-Robert Gauthier: Honourable senators, in July 1994, the United Nations Organization authorized a military intervention in Haiti to unseat a military junta which had forced the elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, into exile in the USA.

I need not go into all of the tumultuous events that have occurred since the return of President Aristide and the arrival of the UN peacekeepers in order to ensure a peaceful transition from a military dictatorship to a democratic presidential regime with a bicameral parliament elected by universal suffrage.

From November 16 through November 29, the Canadian section of the International Assembly of French-speaking Parliamentarians, of which I have the honour to be the head, held seminars at Port-au-Prince to exchange views and information with our parliamentary colleagues in Haiti focussed on issues essential to Parliamentary action in a democracy. Within a few days, I shall be tabling in the Senate a complete report on this Canadian initiative. The seminar was organized as part of the Canadian program of international cooperation and financed through Canadian funding provided by the Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agency which, as you know, is the key organizer of francophone summits and the body which dispenses assistance to development within la Francophonie.