

I may be anticipating comments Senator Simard wishes to make on another bill a little later. Those are the facts of the case.

I am inclined to move a motion to refer Bill C-65 back to the committee. I will not do it because there are other ways to tackle this problem.

It has been suggested that a committee be set up to examine the total context of the Government of Canada's cultural policies and those of its agencies. We seem to do it in bits and pieces. One committee looks at the CBC, another looks at something else. In the meantime, the agencies pretty well do what they want.

The Canada Council, in one stroke of the pen, has said the Art Bank will go. One of the richest collections of art spanning over 30 years will be disposed of one way or another.

You are preparing to put the axe to me, Your Honour, and that is fine, but do not take Senator Corbin for granted. I have not been given satisfactory answers in committee, and the follow-up has not been satisfactory. I will, if not in the next sitting of the Senate, certainly in the next session, take initiatives to put some order into that area.

• (1420)

I look forward with great anticipation to what Senator Simard will tell us on the matter of pensions for members of Parliament.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.

WEBER-MALAKHOV ARCTIC EXPEDITION

TRIBUTES

Leave having been given to revert to Senators' Statements:

Hon. Philippe Deane Gigantès: Honourable senators, Richard Weber, who skied to the North Pole and back, with only one companion, and carrying all his equipment, is being named Hero of Russia. We have not given him one flower.

[Translation]

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT RETIRING ALLOWANCES ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham moved the third reading of Bill C-85, to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act and to provide for the continuation of a certain provision.

Hon. Jean-Maurice Simard: Honourable senators, I have only a few comments and do not expect to exceed the 15 minutes usually allowed at this stage. If I do, it will be because I was pressed for time and did not have a chance to prepare a more structured speech than the one you are about to hear.

In fact, I will need more time than I intended because I will have to refer to three or four documents.

Honourable senators, since the fall of 1993, there were many months when the Senate did not sit because the Chrétien government failed to plan and to proceed with its legislative agenda in an orderly and efficient manner. That was, unfortunately, the government's decision.

Similarly, we are now seeing one of those not necessarily mortal but most certainly venial sins committed by the Liberal government.

Suddenly, we are faced with an avalanche of bills, and the Senate is being asked to approve this legislation without full and detailed consideration. Well, honourable senators, it is our duty. It is my duty to consider Bill C-85, for instance, the bill to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, and Bill C-91, which was rushed through yesterday — and I will get back to this, if you will allow me to digress somewhat later on — the bill to continue the Federal Development Bank and to give it new powers and new capital. The same applies to Bill C-104, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Young Offenders Act, which concerns the use of forensic DNA analysis.

The Senate did not spend and will not spend any time on these bills unless, a few hours from now, enough senators vote against one or two or three of these bills.

In other words, the Senate does not have enough time to do justice to these bills, to important legislation that will have a major impact on the lives of Canadians in a variety of ways. We really have no time to proceed with a serious analysis of these measures.

If the government were really doing its job, it would have introduced this legislation much sooner. At the very least, in the case of these three bills, for instance, the government could — as repeatedly requested by senators on this side, by Canadians, editorial writers and leaders of public opinion, each in their own way and with their own resources — have postponed final approval of some of these bills and scheduled third reading in the fall.

To get back to Bill C-85, there are several reasons why I feel this bill should be reviewed by our senators. First of all, as you know, the bill deals with the employment benefits of members of Parliament. The bill was passed by the members of the House of Commons.

This government told us through its minister, the President of the Treasury Board, on June 29 when the Senate, represented by the committee so ably chaired by our colleague Senator Murray, spent only one hour on the bill, perhaps an extra two minutes, but not more than 62 minutes. I do not think that is what Canadians expect from the Senate. However, 62 minutes is still 50 minutes more than the House of Commons, whose committee examined the bill and spent a grand total of 12 minutes on clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-85. Now that is outrageous.