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Wednesday, October 1, 1997

—

THE HONOURABLE GILDAS L. MOLGAT
SPEAKER

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

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

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

THE LATE ALISTAIR FRASER, B.A., LL.B.

TRIBUTES

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn: Honourable senators, yesterday we paid tribute to fallen comrades, to retired colleagues, and to our new senators, all of them members of our family here. Today I would like to say a few words in memory of a very distinguished gentleman who was a member of our extended parliamentary family, the former Clerk of the House of Commons, Alistair Fraser, who passed away on September 1 at the age of 74.

Alistair particularly indicated that he did not wish to have a funeral. Many of the thoughts which would have been expressed during such an occasion were muted, so I wish to express, in this chamber, some memories about a member of our extended family.

For many of us who, in terms of our parliamentary life, grew up on the Hill, Alistair was a figure of wisdom, of humour and of kindness in these corridors. No matter what your party was, he was a symbol of fairness in and out of his important office. He was a mentor and a superb teacher to those of us who were trying to learn the mysteries of parliamentary procedure.

He tried to enter the House of Commons through the electoral process, first in the riding of Esquimalt—Saanich, British Columbia, in the 1950s, and second in the riding of Pictou in his home province of Nova Scotia, in the 1960s. Cheerful in defeat, he then helped advise others in both of our chambers.

He was executive assistant to the legendary fisheries minister Jimmy Sinclair in 1952; then to the opposition leader Ross MacDonald, in 1959; and then with Jack W. Pickersgill in 1963.

I met Alistair when I first entered the Parliamentary Press Gallery in 1962, as green as grass on things procedural in Parliament. I relied on him constantly until his retirement in 1979. He was tremendously interested in young people who were tremendously interested in Parliament. That indeed was key to most of his lively and long-lasting friendships with persons no matter what their age.

He became the Clerk of the House of Commons in our centennial year, after a year as assistant clerk. He guided their

procedures through stormy and unpredictable years of minority government and the first majority of Mr. Trudeau in 1974.

His guidance was invaluable. His patience was extraordinary. He oversaw many of the reforms of the system after 1968 as he served Speaker Lucien Lamoureux and also Speaker James Jerome. It was Alistair Fraser who coordinated the highly successful parliamentary internship program, and who was constantly sought out for his advice during the introduction of television into the Commons. His thoughtfulness for the well-being of employees was very natural and it was much appreciated.

After he retired, Alistair kept alive his interest in his favourite place by co-authoring editions of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*.

He often said, as perhaps many of us have said of ourselves, that he worked in one of the most beautiful buildings and sat in one of the most important rooms in Canada. When that work was over, he said he was leaving the nicest job in Canada.

Alistair Fraser was truly one of the nicest and most dedicated persons whom I have met in the past 35 years on Parliament Hill. He was a real friend, and I am privileged to remember him here today.

Hon. Lowell Murray: Honourable senators, permit me just a word to second the excellent tribute which Senator Fairbairn has just paid to our late friend Alistair Fraser. We had been friends or, I suppose, friendly adversaries in a partisan sense, for 36 years, united by our common interest in our native Nova Scotia and in the wider world of politics.

Alistair and I had a more official relationship in the late 1960s when he was Clerk of the House of Commons and I was chief of staff to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Stanfield. In those days, there were no research budgets for opposition parties, just a small budget for the Leader of the Opposition. I must say that, on more than one occasion, Alistair helped me to stretch the leader's office budget in some very, very imaginative ways. I want to record my appreciation of his understanding and his fairness toward the opposition at all times. He was a staunch defender and supporter of our parliamentary traditions and a great servant of Parliament.

• (1410)

As Senator Fairbairn has noted, when he died, it was announced there would be no funeral. Typically, Alistair had left instructions that there was to be no funeral, so those of us who might have attended to pay that kind of tribute were unable to do so.

I had run into him a few times this past year or so, and had no idea of the illness that eventually claimed his life. I was saddened by his death, and saddened also by the relatively small amount of attention that was paid by the media to his career and to the important part he played in parliamentary and political life in this country. Much of this has been put to right by Douglas Fisher in a very fine appreciation of Alistair's life and career, which appeared in today's *Ottawa Sun*.

[Translation]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

CONSTITUTIONAL ERROR—LETTER TO GOVERNOR GENERAL

Hon. Normand Grimard: Honourable senators, in studying the Speech from the Throne I have detected a rather serious constitutional error. I do not know if my friend and colleague Senator Beaudoin, that greatest of constitutional experts, has also noted the heresy. Let me explain. The passage from the Speech from the Throne reads as follows:

The Parliament of Canada is the only institution directly elected by all Canadians.

I do not know if the Constitution Act has been amended recently, but I do know that section 17 stipulates that Parliament consists of three very distinct entities: the Queen, the Senate and the House of Commons.

When the Speech from the Throne states that the Parliament of Canada is the only institution directly elected by all Canadians, therefore, this is an obvious falsehood. What conclusion can be drawn as to the serious nature and the veracity of the other proposals in the Speech from the Throne when it contains such a flagrant constitutional error?

I am well aware, honourable senators, that the Governor General is not the one to blame for this text. Everyone knows that it was turned out by the Prime Minister's people. I have, however, taken the liberty of writing this day to the Governor General. I know the Governor General well, as a friend, and my letter is as follows:

Your Excellency,

...I have examined the Speech from the Throne including the following:

“The Parliament of Canada is the only institution directly elected by all Canadians.”

Unless I am mistaken, the Parliament of Canada is composed of the Queen, the House of Commons and the Senate, the members of which are not elected. Senators are parliamentarians too, just like members of Parliament.

I realize that the Governor General is not the author of the Speech from the Throne, and this is why I make no criticism...

Yours truly,

Normand Grimard

THE LATE LÉON DION

TRIBUTES

Hon. Roch Bolduc: Last August, honourable senators, we lost a great Canadian from Quebec: Léon Dion.

In the late 1940s, Léon returned to Quebec after doing postgraduate work in Germany, on the encouragement of Dr. Munzer, then in England. He introduced the students in the faculty of social sciences at Laval University to post-scholastic political thought from Machiavelli to Harold Laski, his teacher in London, by way of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Hegel, Marx and others. Léon examined all the subtleties of the thought of the great masters of Europe for the young graduates of our collèges classiques keen to know the outcome of the great debate in the West from the 14th century to the present.

He subjected ideologies like Marxism, national socialism, the subject of his doctoral thesis, and American liberalism from the birth of corporate capitalism to the welfare state to intense scrutiny.

Over a ten-year period, Léon spent his summers at the Weidener Library at Harvard like a Benedictine monk, developing and preparing the many publications he put out over a period of 40 years on subjects such as liberalism, the status quo, Canadian federalism, the sociology of American lobby groups and his great work on Quebec society since the end of World War II.

He was a remarkable teacher, sensitive to his students and deeply involved in the political debates of the community. He worked with dedication on the commissions of inquiry into bilingualism and biculturalism.

Here at home, he was somewhat akin to Oliver or Smiley in English Canada. He was also our C.B. MacPherson, but in certain other respects he resembled John Meisel, or Dr. Corry of Queen's, an eminent director in the faculty.

I have some very nostalgic memories of our meetings in Laval's political science faculty, in the early sixties, under his chairmanship. We often continued our discussions at his home, under the kindly eye of Denise, who was a marvellous organizer of his social activities. All of us, Jean-Marie Martin, Jean-Charles Bonenfant, Bergeron, Gosselin, Lemieux, Tremblay, Gélinas and myself, felt we were about to set off on a great intellectual adventure.

Thank you, Léon, for having led the way.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

COMMENTS CONCERNING CONSTITUTIONAL ERROR

Hon. Louis J. Robichaud: Honourable senators, I would like to join with Senator Grimard in pointing out a writer's error in the Speech from the Throne read by the Governor General in the Senate last week.

It is an established fact that the Parliament of Canada consists of Her Majesty the Queen, the Senate, and the House of Commons, and that only the members of the House of Commons are elected.

Someone should have pointed out this error before we did.

I disassociate myself completely and vigorously, however, from Senator Grimard's statement that this slip is typical of the entire Throne speech.

His argument is seriously weakened by lumping both together. I have spoken my mind, honourable senators.

[*English*]

MANITOBA

ASSISTANCE GIVEN DURING SPRING FLOODING OF RED RIVER

Hon. Terry Stratton: Honourable senators, I should like to give specific thanks today for the help Manitoba received this last spring when we experienced our "Flood of the Century." As honourable senators may know, there were four in this chamber who were affected and had problems as a result of the flood: the Honourable Speaker, Senator Spivak, Senator Jessiman, and myself. As a matter of fact, some of us disappeared from Ottawa a bit early in order to pay particular attention to what was taking place back home.

I should like to thank all Canadians for their support, both financially and to our morale, during our flood. The morale boost that you gave us was tremendous.

Second — and I am sure all honourable senators join me in this — I should like to thank all of the Manitobans who fought that flood with enthusiasm and pure guts. Had you been there and experienced it, you would have been amazed at their intestinal fortitude.

• (1420)

Third, I should like to thank the Honourable Duff Roblin for his vision, first, in realizing that something had to be done; and, second, in having the Winnipeg Floodway constructed. If it had not been there, there would have been 10 feet of water at the corner of Portage and Main, just to give you an example of the magnitude of the flood.

Last — but not last at all in the hearts of Manitobans — there is the Canadian Armed Forces. The job that they did during that time was simply unbelievable. If they were given a black eye by

Somalia, in the eyes of Manitobans they certainly got rid of it and came out shining in those hours of our need. They were just tremendous.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

FIRST REPORT TABLED

Hon. Colin Kenny, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, tabled the committee's first report, pursuant to the Parliament of Canada Act.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

ADDRESS IN REPLY—TERMINATION OF DEBATE ON EIGHTH SITTING DAY—NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Sharon Carstairs (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I give notice that tomorrow, Thursday, October 2, 1997, I will move:

That the proceedings on the Order of the Day for resuming the debate on the motion for an Address in reply to His Excellency the Governor General's Speech from the Throne addressed to both Houses of Parliament be concluded on the eighth sitting day on which the order is debated.

CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

NOTICE OF MOTION TO RECONSTITUTE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Hon. Lowell Murray: Honourable senators, I give notice that on Tuesday next, October 7, 1997, I will move:

That the Special Committee of the Senate on the Cape Breton Development Corporation be revived to examine and report upon the Annual Report, Corporate Plan and progress reports of the Cape Breton Development Corporation and related matters;

That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to examine witnesses, to report from time to time and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the Committee;

That the papers and evidence received and taken on the subject and the report tabled with the Clerk of the Senate on April 25, 1997 by the Special Committee of the Senate on the Cape Breton Development Corporation during the Second Session of the Thirty-fifth Parliament be referred to the Committee;

That the Committee be authorized to permit coverage by electronic media of its public proceedings with the least possible disruption of its hearings; and

That the Committee submit its final report no later than December 15, 1997, and that the Committee retain all powers necessary to disseminate and publicize its final report until December 30, 1997.

SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO ESTABLISH SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Hon. William M. Kelly: Honourable senators, I give notice that on Thursday next, October 2, 1997, I will move:

That a special committee of the Senate be appointed to hear evidence on and consider matters relating to the security and intelligence operations of the Government of Canada;

That the Committee examine and report on the extent to which the recommendations of the Report of the Special Committee on Terrorism and Public Safety (June 1987) and the Report of the Special Committee on Terrorism and Public Safety (June 1989) have been addressed thus far by the Government of Canada;

That the Committee examine and make recommendations with respect to the adequacy of the review or oversight of the Government of Canada's security and intelligence apparatus, including each of the organizations in departments of government that conduct security and intelligence operations or that have a security and intelligence mandate;

That the Committee examine and make recommendations with respect to intra-governmental and inter-governmental coordination relating to the Government of Canada's security intelligence mandate and operations;

That the Committee examine and make recommendations with respect to the overall mandate and current threat assessment capability of the Government of Canada's security intelligence apparatus and of the individual organizations therein;

That seven Senators, to be designated at a later date, act as members of the Committee;

That the Committee have power to report from time to time, to send for persons, papers and records, and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the Committee; and

That the Committee present its final report no later than April 15, 1998.

MARITIME HELICOPTER PROCUREMENT

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. J. Michael Forrestall: Honourable senators, I give notice that on Tuesday next, October 7, 1997, I will call the attention of the Senate to the maritime helicopter procurement issue.

QUESTION PERIOD

SOLICITOR GENERAL

APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES AND POLICIES OF RCMP TO POLICE FORCES ABSORBED BY FEDERAL FORCE— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Brenda M. Robertson: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. During the attempt by the Province of New Brunswick to disband the Moncton police force and to impose an RCMP regional police force on the city, the Premier of New Brunswick, this past July, guaranteed that if and when the Moncton police officers were absorbed into the RCMP, they would not be subject to the normal transfers that occur in the federal force.

Will the Leader of the Government in the Senate further inquire of the Solicitor General if officials of his department or of the RCMP assured the Premier of New Brunswick that a no-transfer guarantee would be given to Moncton police officers, which would be contrary to the guidelines and policies of the RCMP as they apply to all other members of the force?

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the answer is a very definitive "Yes." I am not familiar with the situation. Obviously, I read about it in the newspapers, as did other honourable senators. I would be very happy to look into it further and provide the senator with the appropriate information.

Senator Robertson: Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question. Will the Leader of the Government also inquire of the Solicitor General that if he, his predecessor, officials of the department, or officials of the RCMP authorized Premier McKenna to give such assurances, how such directions cannot be discriminatory against all other members of the RCMP, and how this will not be disruptive within the RCMP?

Senator Graham: I would be very happy to obtain the views of the Solicitor General on that particular subject as well.

JUSTICE

TRUE COST OF ESTABLISHING REGISTRY UNDER FIREARMS ACT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, my question is also to the Leader of the Government in the Senate. In a briefing note that was recently discovered under the Access to Information Act, it was stated that the cost of the new firearms registry will be more than the \$85 million that was originally predicted. Just how much more has not been determined. According to this information, we also understand that the implementation of the new registry must now be delayed.

How much more will taxpayers in Canada be responsible for financially in relation to this registry? How much will they have to pay? Is the government planning to increase the registry fees as a result? Does the leader or anyone close to him know when this registry will actually be imposed?

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, to answer the last part of the question first, I will attempt to determine when the registry will actually begin.

Is the government planning to increase the registration fees? Not that I am aware of. The honourable senators has asked a rather extensive question with respect to how much it is costing or what the anticipated cost will be, and, obviously, I will have to ask for that information.

EFFECT OF LITIGATION BY PROVINCES ON IMPLEMENTATION OF FIREARMS ACT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question on this matter. In view of the fact that there is a lawsuit being pursued on this issue by the Provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and, I believe, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, is this in any way affecting the government's ability or desire to proceed at this particular point in time? It would be nice to know the answer to that question because this legislation will affect a lot of people and their businesses. Does the leader have an answer to that question, please?

• (1430)

Senator Graham: To my knowledge, is it not impeding the government's ability to proceed with registration. Certainly, I am aware of the lawsuit by Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon which the honourable senator mentioned. I shall seek the information he is requesting.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

SHORTFALL OF FUNDS IN ARMED FORCES BUDGET— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. J. Michael Forrestall: Honourable senators, I wish to welcome the government leader to his new responsibilities, as well as ask a question of him.

It has come to my attention that the Canadian Army, so important in peacekeeping operations around the globe, has a \$150-million shortfall in its budget. Can the leader confirm this amount, or at least that the shortfall is very large?

I am informed that the budget shortfall has led to a plan that would seriously reduce the troop strength of the Canadian Army by some 3,000 positions, and perhaps more. The Canadian Armed Forces is being dismembered before our very eyes and we do not see it. This includes eliminating the recently raised three light battalions, 1,500 personnel; eliminating one company each from the remaining six infantry battalions, 600 personnel; eliminating one gun battery from each of the three artillery regiments, 300 personnel; eliminating one squadron from each of the three armoured regiments, 300 personnel; and eliminating the 8th Canadian Hussars; 300 personnel.

Can the distinguished Leader of the Government in the Senate give some indication of the level of the cut? Is it indeed \$150 million, and can he confirm that this is where the government intends to find that \$150 million?

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I agree with the statement with respect to the tremendous contribution that our peacekeepers have made around the globe. As a matter of fact, I have had personal experience in my election-observing days with Canadian peacekeepers on several fronts: in Namibia, on the border of Angola and elsewhere. I think all of us in this chamber share in a sense of pride and admiration for these most excellent ambassadors in so many parts of the world.

Senator Forrestall talked about a cut and a shortfall. In the first instance he spoke of a shortfall of \$150 million, and then about a cut of \$150 million.

Senator Forrestall: The shortfall is the money. The cut is to meet the problem created by the \$150 million shortfall.

Senator Graham: Presumably the honourable senator is referring to the strength in the armed forces, and with regard to the shortfall of \$150 million, he was talking about the actual budget.

Senator Forrestall: When the leader sees the question in written form, he will understand what information I am seeking.

Senator Graham: I will be happy to seek out that information for the honourable senator as soon as I possibly can.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

NON-PERFORMANCE OF MIFFLIN PLAN—AVAILABILITY OF PROMISED RETRAINING FUNDS FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA FISHERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Pat Carney: Honourable senators, I, too, should like to welcome the new Leader of Government in the Senate to the joys of answering questions from this side of the house.

I asked this question in March of this year, but received no answer. Almost one year ago, then fisheries minister Fred Mifflin promised “whatever it takes” in training funds for B.C. fishers and shore workers displaced by the government’s fishery plan. At that time, the minister’s plan would displace half the fleet.

Almost a year later the money is still not forthcoming, and on Friday some of the fish training centres closed down for lack of funds. The South Island Streams Centre, which was training fishers, had to close most of its programs. Only eight fishermen out of 200 are still being trained.

When will the estimated \$500 million required to train displaced fisheries workers be available to the workers, and how soon can the Leader of the Government in the Senate give me the answer?

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham (Leader of the Government): I will attempt to get that answer as quickly as possible. It is a very specific question, and I shall attempt to get the answer by tomorrow, or at least by next week.

Senator Carney: I do not understand. I asked a specific question and therefore naturally expect a specific answer.

Senator Graham: The specific question was how soon can you get the answer, and I said as soon as possible; perhaps tomorrow or, failing that, by next week.

AT WORK IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

COST AND PURPOSE OF PRODUCING MATERIAL— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Leonard J. Gustafson: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. There has arrived on my desk a very elaborate piece of material entitled *At Work in Rural Communities*.

I live in a rural community, and I have not seen much that the government has done there, except take things away.

I am concerned about the cost of this material. Who had the contract to produce it, and for what purpose? How broad was the circulation, and what was the cost?

These kinds of things do not help anyone involved in government.

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham (Leader of the Government): I would like to preface my response by asking how in the name of heavens the honourable senator got that in here.

Senator Gustafson: I am pretty strong.

Senator Graham: The Leader of the Opposition concluded his remarks of welcome to Senator Peggy Butts by saying “Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.” Perhaps that is part of the ammunition.

At any rate I will, with due diligence, attempt to get a response as soon as I can.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

FAILURE OF FINANCE MINISTER TO REDUCE PREMIUMS— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Michael A. Meighen: Honourable senators, I, too, am happy to congratulate the Leader of the Government in the Senate on undertaking his new responsibilities. I can see he is enjoying answering questions from this side so I will prolong his joy just a bit longer.

My question relates to Employment Insurance premiums. Given that, according to best estimates, the account will be at a \$16-billion surplus this fiscal year, could the Leader of the Government explain to members here today why his Minister of Finance refuses to consider any reduction of the premiums; specifically from \$2.80 per \$100 of insurable earnings to approximately \$2.20 as recommended by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and other forecasters and commentators?

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham (Leader of the Government): The Honourable Senator Meighen used the specific figure of \$2.20, as advocated by some business groups, and referred to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. I understand that a cut of that nature would represent forgone budgetary revenue in the order of \$4.2 billion in 1998.

EI premiums, honourable senators, were scheduled to move up to \$3.30 when this government took office, and the government managed to reduce them to \$2.90 this year. I believe there was a 5-cent reduction in the past year, and the government has committed to reducing it by an additional 10 cents in 1998. It is worth remembering, honourable senators, that every 10-cent reduction in the EI premium costs the government \$700 million.

• (1440)

The honourable senator stated that by the end of the year the surplus will be in the order of \$16 billion. I do not know whether that is true; it is the honourable senator’s projection. I do not know what the figure is at the present time.

Section 66 of the Employment Insurance Act, which was passed in June of 1996, states, in part:

The Commission shall, with the approval of the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister and the Minister of Finance, set the premium rate for each year at a rate that the Commission considers will, to the extent possible,

Honourable senators, this is the key part:

(a) ensure that there will be enough revenue over a business cycle to pay the amounts authorized to be charged to the Employment Insurance Account;

If I remember correctly, the Minister of Finance requested from the Chief Actuary the amount of the surplus needed to ensure that we would not run a deficit in the event of a possible future recession. I also understand that the Chief Actuary responded that the surplus should be in the range of \$15 billion. I assume we want to act responsibly in this respect.

Senator Meighen: Honourable senators, to bring C.D. Howe's quote up to date, "What's a billion?" To say that we should rejoice that the premium was not increased from \$2.80 to \$3.20 is a little like saying that the Leader of the Government should be happy that I am only going to whack him over the head three times instead of ten.

It seems to me that Employment Insurance premiums should not be a primary method of fighting the deficit or the debt. We should not be seeking to collect such a vast amount of money to apply to those purposes through this job killing tax.

Would the Leader of the Government in the Senate undertake to table the information produced by the Chief Actuary indicating that it was prudent to accumulate a \$15-billion surplus, which as I understand it would translate into a forecast level of unemployment of 10 per cent to 15 per cent? Perhaps the government knows something other people do not.

Senator Graham: Honourable senators, I would be happy to attempt to obtain that information and to table it.

Further to what I said about the 40-cent reduction, reducing the premium from \$3.30 to \$2.90 for 1997 alone amounts to premium reductions in the order of \$1.7 billion. As I mentioned earlier, we have already announced a further 10-cent reduction in premium rates for 1998.

If the honourable senator is suggesting that we implement such a cut, even at the expense of a larger deficit, then I would remind him, and others of like mind, that they once made deficit reduction a condition for jobs and growth.

I believe it is worthwhile pointing out that, currently, Canada has the lowest rate of payroll taxes in the major industrialized countries.

Hon. John Lynch-Staunton (Leader of the Opposition): I move the adjournment of the debate.

[*Translation*]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

METHODS OF PARTY FUNDING—
INQUIRY BY ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Hon. Pierre Claude Nolin: Honourable senators, I wish to congratulate the minister on his appointment. Rather troubling

news about an inquiry currently being conducted by the RCMP into the Liberal Party of Canada's funding methods has just surfaced in the other place. Could you inform this house of any developments in this inquiry?

[*English*]

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I am sorry that I cannot inform the honourable senator of any developments. He is bringing for the first time such news to me and to many members of this chamber.

Senator Nolin: Will the Leader of the Government assure this house that the government will not interfere with such an inquiry?

The honourable senator is shaking his head. May we have a verbal answer, please?

Senator Graham: It is a hypothetical question. The honourable senator knows darn well that the government would not interfere.

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT OFFICIAL LANGUAGES SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

STANDING JOINT COMMITTEES—MESSAGE FROM COMMONS

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that the following message had been received from the House of Commons:

Ordered,— That the Standing Joint Committees be composed of the Members listed below:

Library of Parliament

Members: Catterall, Cloutier, Finlay, Grey (Edmonton North), Hilstrom, Karygiannis, Lavigne, Lill, Malhi, Mayfield, Mercier, Plamondon, Price, Redman, Saada, St. Denis—(16)

Associate Members: Davies, Dumas

Official Languages

Members: Assadourian, Bellemare, Bradshaw, Breikreuz (Yellowhead), Coderre, Finestone, Godfrey, Godin, Jaffer, Kilger, McWhinney, Meredith, Paradis, Plamondon, St-Jacques, Tremblay (Rimouski—Métis)—(16)

Associate Members: Brien, Nystrom, Vautour

Scrutiny of Regulations

Members: Bryden, Casey, DeVillers, Epp, Jennings, Lee, Lunn, Maloney, Marceau, Mark, McKay (Scarborough East), Murray, Nystrom, Shepherd, St-Hilaire, Wappel, White (North Vancouver)—(17)

Associate Members: Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar), Bellehumeur, Guimond

That a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint their Honours of the names of the Members to serve on behalf of this House on the Standing Joint Committees.

ATTEST

ROBERT MARLEAU
The Clerk of the House of Commons

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of His Excellency the Governor General's Speech From the Throne at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-sixth Parliament.

Hon. Jean B. Forest, seconded by the Honourable Senator Mercier, moved:

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General of Canada:

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Roméo A. LeBlanc, a Member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Military Merit, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the Senate of Canada in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

She said: Honourable senators, in his Address to Parliament on Tuesday last, His Excellency the Governor General spoke to the

needs and concerns of Canadians, gave voice to the values they strive to uphold, and expressed the hopes, the dreams and aspirations which they hold dear. He then outlined the measures which the government will take to meet those needs, alleviate those concerns, and help to make real those hopes, dreams and aspirations.

During the past mandate, because of our precarious economic and financial situation, frugal fiscal management had to be undertaken. This caused severe dislocation to business and labour and to institutions and individuals. Government itself was not immune. Everyone had to tighten their belts. Few survived without sacrifice.

As His Excellency pointed out, however, the hard work and the many sacrifices made by all Canadians has now paid off. The deficit is down and almost out. The economy on the whole is robust. Inflation remains low, as do interest rates. Unemployment, while stubbornly stuck at unacceptably high levels in certain parts of the country, is exhibiting an encouraging downward trend in many parts of Canada.

• (1450)

While, as His Excellency pointed out, the government must "continue to be vigilant and responsible about keeping the financial affairs of the country in order," it "has regained the ability to address the priorities of Canadians while living within its means." As the Finance Minister so aptly put it:

A government relieved of the deficit is not a government relieved of its obligations. It is a government able to exercise its obligations.

As candidates across the country canvassed their ridings in last summer's election campaign, they learned of the concerns of their constituents, and they learned that underlying all the other concerns was a deep and troubling anxiety felt by many Canadians over the threat to the future unity of their country. Candidates learned that many Canadians wanted their government to play a leadership role in the debate about the future of their country.

Candidates also learned at firsthand what Canadians wanted done to address their other concerns. They pressed for stimulation of the economy, creation of new jobs, especially for young people, measures to alleviate child poverty and that of senior citizens, increased investment in health care and education, and steps to create safer communities.

Canadians made it clear, however, that they wanted these measures to be taken without risk to the hard-earned financial stability so recently achieved. They wanted the government to take a balanced approach with spending carefully targeted to the areas of highest priority.

The response to all this information garnered from the grass roots is contained in the Speech from the Throne, wherein His Excellency the Governor General stated:

The government is committed to following this balanced approach of social investment and prudent financial management as it leads Canada toward renewed and lasting economic health and increased social cohesion.

His Excellency then went on to outline the government's priorities — building a stronger Canada, investing in children, investing in quality care and good health, building safer communities, creating opportunities for young Canadians, investing in knowledge and creativity, expanding opportunities in aboriginal communities, looking outward, celebrating the millennium and moving forward into the 21st century.

Allow me the opportunity to speak to a few of these priorities. First on my list is building a stronger Canada. I say that because this issue was the one compelling concern which prompted me to accept an appointment to this chamber at a time when my husband, Roc, and I were planning our retirement. I hope that in some small way I might be able to contribute to the building of a stronger Canada.

It is a project in which I have been engaged all my life. My love of Canada was instilled in me at a very early age by my English-born mother and my father who fought in the trenches of France during the First World War, was wounded at Vimy Ridge and spent several months in England awaiting the end of the war and transport back to Canada in a hospital ship. As a child, I often heard him say that during those long, lonely months in England, he told himself that if he ever got back to Canada alive, he would never go overseas again. He never did. He returned to the prairies from whence he had come, and there he died.

My husband, a Franco-Manitoban, also grew up in a home where love of Canada was fostered, the French language and culture were treasured and nurtured, and the Catholic faith was devoutly practised. From this background, four sons were drawn into service of their country during the Second World War; a sure sign that a healthy love of country goes far beyond the narrow nationalism that has caused so much grief in the world. Instead, it reaches out to the rest of the world, ready to be of service in time of need.

Roc and I have since had the good fortune to travel to many parts of Canada, from Tuktoyaktuk in the Arctic to Canada's southernmost points; from the west coast of Vancouver Island to the east coast of Newfoundland, and many points in between. We have marvelled at Canada's awesome beauty and her magnificent expanse; but Canada is much more than a piece of geography. Most of all, we revelled in her people, in the richness of their diversity, the vibrancy of their lives, and the wealth of their talents and giftedness, all of which contribute to the marvel of the Canadian mosaic.

Having had that experience of Canada and of what it is to be Canadian, Roc and I wanted to have our children share something of that experience. Therefore, 30 years ago we decided to take them on a cross-Canada tour which would include visits to the capital region, to Expo and to Gaspé, where Roc's father came from. To transport and accommodate our large family, Roc purchased a huge school bus and converted it into the prototype of a modern motorhome. It turned out to be an ingenious, self-contained contraption which accommodated our large family — seven children and ourselves. It was aptly christened "Voyageur II" and we were happy campers as we set out from Edmonton to points east.

After stopping at various points across the prairies, we travelled through northern Ontario and parts of Quebec, where French was the only language spoken and where our children learned the value of having been sent to French schools, and how I wished someone had sent me.

Here in the capital city we took them on tours of the Parliament buildings, the Supreme Court, the Mint and other historic places of interest. At Expo, they got a glimpse of the world on display and Canada at its best. Historic Quebec City enlivened their interest in Canadian history and the French culture in which their father was raised. In hindsight, we saw Canada at her best, and in one of her prouder moments.

I have taken the liberty of relating these personal vignettes only because I think they mirror the experiences of many other Canadians. I believe that if more of our young people could have the opportunity to meet other young Canadians in their own milieu — on their own turf, so to speak — they would gain a much deeper understanding of each other and a much deeper appreciation of the country which they all call home. Programs like Katimavik and the various student exchange programs have done much to bolster and solidify our young people's sense of being Canadian.

Here, too, personal family experiences have taught us the value of having young people from different areas and different backgrounds live in each other's homes and learn from each other. A few weeks after going to the Chicoutimi area to live with a French-Canadian family, our grandson phoned his mother to proclaim quite jubilantly that he was sure he had it made because he was beginning to dream in French.

As a consequence of these experiences, I was very pleased to hear announced in the Speech from the Throne that the government planned to provide more funding for exchange programs which will, undoubtedly, help to bridge the differences between Canadians from all parts of the country.

In the ongoing process of building a stronger Canada, the first ministers recently engaged in an encouraging debate at their conference in Calgary. As the Prime Minister said in his Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne:

We welcome the Calgary initiative of the premiers and territorial leaders. It is a constructive statement and affirmation of important values about what Canada is, and what makes us Canadian.

Their commitment to involve their people in the debate on Canadian unity is also a welcome initiative. The fact that the leaders of the Conservative, New Democratic and Reform Parties have indicated their support for these initiatives gives rise to hope for further progress and an eventual positive outcome.

Building a stronger Canada begins with building stronger, healthier families, and while parents are unquestionably the primary caregivers and educators of their children, all families require help from the broader community. Some families, suffering from illness or struggling to survive and to raise families on low-level incomes, need more help than others. It is good that the government is committed to investing in these children. The Centres of Excellence, the expansion of the Head Start Program to reserves, the added funds for the Canada Child Tax Benefit Fund: These and other initiatives do not represent a government hand-out to poor families but, rather, a hand-up to enable their children to participate fully in the educational opportunities to which, as Canadian citizens, they are entitled. In helping them to reach their potential, Canada comes closer to reaching hers.

• (1500)

In the Throne Speech, the government, through the Youth Employment Strategy, made a commitment to create better opportunities for young Canadians, in order to help them make the important transition from schooling to the work force. This is welcome news to those who, though well educated by yesterday's standards, do not have the necessary skills or knowledge to get a good start in the work world of today. To enable them to do so will require the combined resources of government, business, labour, and the post-secondary education system.

Organizations such as The Learning Link, which facilitates cooperation and joint action within these groups, apprenticeship programs for tradespersons, and co-op programs for university students all provide good examples of what can be achieved through creative planning and cooperation. Concepts such as "learning in the workplace" and "life-long learning" must become the bywords and the beacons of modern education if it is to prepare people to be successful in the knowledge-based society in which we live and learn.

Last year, as a member of Senator Bonnell's Subcommittee on Post-secondary Education, I was privileged to attend public meetings which were held from coast to coast, and to hear from students, faculty members and administrators of post-secondary

educational institutions. We learned of students' concerns, which ranged from problems of access and mobility to burgeoning debt loads and financial needs. From universities, we learned of lack of funding for faculty appointments required to teach the increasing numbers of students, and of ageing infrastructures incapable of supporting the research so critical to a knowledge-based society.

We were in Halifax the evening that the budget was tabled, and were pleased to learn about a number of government initiatives to be undertaken to assist students, faculty and administrators in the areas of their greatest concern.

The government realizes that just as good teaching is basic to transmitting prior knowledge, so good research is basic to acquiring new knowledge. It therefore committed itself in the budget to providing funding to establish and maintain the Canada Foundation for Innovation. This is to be done in partnership with the provinces, the private sector and the universities. These funds injected into the system will give tremendous impetus to the kind of research which is critical to moving us into the 21st century.

Last week, as Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Alberta, I attended the installation of Martha Piper, who had been vice-president of research at the University of Alberta, as the newly appointed President of the University of British Columbia. There, I met university presidents and chancellors from across the country, and they were unanimous in their support of the establishment of the Canadian Foundation for Innovation and the other initiatives the government is taking in support of post-secondary education. The scholarship program announced in the Throne Speech last week, established in celebration of the millennium, was welcomed by all. I have heard some suggestions, however, that in this regard we need to get a head start in order to help out those students who are in need of assistance now.

It could be argued that if Canada is to be at the cutting edge of tomorrow's competitive, knowledge-based society, we need to assist the students in attendance today. We need to develop for them the great institutions of learning where, as has been said, they can learn from the wisdom of the dead and the doubting of the living.

Having earned a head of grey hair in the field of education, you will understand why I propose that, in assisting our young people to acquire a good education, our government will be providing them with a valid passport to bridge their transition into the 21st century.

Honourable senators, we of our generation could well emulate the old man in Will Allen Dromgoole's poem *The Bridge Builder*. Allow me in conclusion just to read it:

An old man, going a lone highway,
 Came at the evening, cold and gray
 To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,
 Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
 The old man crossed in the twilight dim -
 That sullen stream had no fears for him;
 But he turned, when he reached the other side,
 And built a bridge to span the tide.
 "Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
 "You are wasting your strength in building here.
 Your journey will end with the ending day;
 You never again must pass this way.
 You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
 Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"
 The builder lifted his old grey head.
 "Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
 "There followeth after me today
 A youth whose feet must pass this way.
 This chasm that has been naught to me
 To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
 He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
 Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

Honourable colleagues, in these past few years it might well be said that we, too, have been crossing a chasm with a sullen tide. Indeed, in naval parlance it has sometimes seemed that we were walking the plank while dealing with issues as difficult as national unity, economic viability, environmental sustainability,

and maintenance of our prized social safety net. It has been tough, but we are almost there and we cannot make a misstep now. We must get to the other side so that, like the old man in Dromgoole's poem, we too can build a bridge for the fair-haired youth who will follow us.

As we near the end of the 20th century, and a few of us here near the end of our service in this chamber, we must work together to build that bridge. In the language of my husband, Roc, who is a most reliable builder, we must make sure that the drawings are designed to carry the load, our cost estimates are right on, the pilings are deep, the girders are strong, the tools are appropriate, and the workmanship is of the highest calibre. If we make sure that these specifications are followed, our bridge to the future will be completed on budget, on time, and with a minimum of deficiencies.

If we can do that, then those who follow will be able to cross over the chasm from this century to the next, in safety and confidence, hitting full stride as they reach the other side — Canadians in all their wonderful, colourful diversity, leading the way.

Honourable senators, we can do it if we try.

On motion of Senator Mercier, debate adjourned.

The Senate adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

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