

THE SENATE

Wednesday, November 18, 1981

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

DOCUMENTS TABLED

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government) tabled:

Report of the Superintendent of Insurance on the Administration of the *Investment Companies Act* for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1981, pursuant to section 27(1) of the said Act, Chapter 33, Statutes of Canada, 1970-71-72.

QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

THE CONSTITUTION

TEXT OF RESOLUTION TO BE TABLED IN PARLIAMENT

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Could the Leader of the Government tell us whether or not, as was suggested yesterday, the new constitutional resolution will be tabled today in the other place and here also, if we are still sitting?

[*English*]

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I spoke with the house leader in the other place only 10 minutes ago. The honourable the minister stated that as of now there is a 99 per cent chance that the notice of motion will be tabled in the other place at some point this afternoon, and it is anticipated that debate on the motion may well commence on Friday of this week. That is the latest information made known to me.

[*Translation*]

Senator Flynn: Does that mean that the consultations which have been going on for a few days between the federal government, on the one hand, and the provinces and other groups, such as Indians, on the other, are now over? Is that phase completely finished and is the drafting of the final text the only thing left to do?

[*English*]

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, I understand that a helpful amount of useful consultation has been held, the details of which are not available to me at this time.

[*Translation*]

Senator Flynn: In particular, have consultations been held with the premier-elect of Manitoba?

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay: That would go smoother.

Senator Flynn: Not with the Manitoba Liberal opposition though!

• (1405)

[*English*]

AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OF CANADA AND NINE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS CONCERNING RIGHTS OF NATIVE PEOPLES

Hon. Willie Adams: Honourable senators, I too have a question for Senator Austin. I heard this morning that there is no chance of getting section 34, on native rights, back in the accord. I was wondering if the minister has had a chance to meet the people from Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories.

Hon. Jack Austin (Minister of State): Honourable senators, I thank Senator Adams for his question. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and I met with the Council of the Northwest Territories during the lunch hour today, and discussed their representations, which are, essentially, three in number. They are: First, that section 34 be reinstated in the joint resolution so far as federal jurisdiction is concerned; secondly, that paragraph 9(e) of the so-called Vancouver formula—the provision allowing extension of provincial boundaries northward—be deleted from the accord, or agreement, of November 5; and thirdly, that section 9(f) of the so-called Vancouver formula be deleted, this being a provision that would require the federal government, if it sought to create new provinces in the Yukon or the Northwest Territories, to proceed under the general amending formula to obtain the concurrence of the provinces.

Those matters were discussed, Senator Adams, I cannot tell you the outcome of representations made during a visit by the Council of the Northwest Territories to Ottawa this week but, as Senator Perrault has said, some time later today the joint resolution will be made available in the other place, and perhaps here, if we have not adjourned prior to that time, and we will then have the actual document before us.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Do you mean that at that time we will finally be given the replies to the questions we have raised?

THE ECONOMY

INTENTIONS OF GOVERNMENT RE 1980 POVERTY LINE UPDATE

Hon. Jack Marshall: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate concerning the poverty line figures which have just been published, and which I received in my office today.

There are over one million persons in Canada living below the poverty line. According to the 1980 poverty line figures, established by one of our Senate committees, a family of two requires an annual income of \$11,000. Those living on the veterans' allowances are only receiving \$752.30 per month. I wonder if the government leader could find out what the government's intentions are with regard to reviewing old age security pensions, war veterans' allowances, widows' pensions and the like, to bring people up to a reasonable standard of living in today's inflationary times.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the government has a continuing concern for the less fortunate in our society. Again, this was reflected in the recent budget where, despite all the predictions of the opposition, the social programs were left intact, and, indeed, enhanced. The detail requested by the honourable senator will be sought, and information will be provided.

THE CONSTITUTION

TEXT OF RESOLUTION TO BE PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT— DISTRIBUTION TO SENATORS—TIMING OF DEBATE

Hon. G. I. Smith: Honourable senators, I wonder if I might direct a question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate regarding the text of the draft resolution to which reference has been made. If it should happen that that draft is unavailable for distribution in this chamber before we adjourn, could arrangements be made to distribute it to the offices of senators as soon as it is available?

● (14:03)

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, as soon as the information is made available, it will be circulated to the best of the ability of the government.

Hon. Ernest C. Manning: Honourable senators, may I ask the Leader of the Government a question on the same matter? In light of the anticipated presentation of the resolution today or tomorrow in the other place, should we assume that the resolution will be debated in this chamber next week, or is the timetable firm enough to indicate a date at this time?

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, when the notice of motion has been tabled in the other place, it is the intention of the government to hold meetings involving the leadership of the parties in both chambers to discuss how this matter may be most usefully debated. It is expected that the debate will commence first in the other place and at some later point—which date will most certainly be discussed with the Leader of the Opposition here—debate in this chamber will be held.

[Senator Flynn.]

Discussions may well take place in the other place this evening or tomorrow morning with respect to the length and terms of the debate, whether or not it may be possible to establish a set time for a vote, and matters of that kind. It is the intention to table the notice of motion as soon as possible in the Senate as well, so that the motion will be on our order paper. From that point we can then proceed to determine our debating schedule here.

Senator Smith: On that point I wonder if I might ask a supplementary question of the Leader of the Government. Is it reasonable to assume that the house order in the other place limiting the length of the debate to two days is no longer considered by the leadership in that place to be applicable?

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, of course, the original motion has been withdrawn in the other place. I may have a similar proposal later this afternoon with respect to that same motion on our order paper. It may be that the wording of the new motion will be received so ecstatically that the members of the other place may wish to give it immediate unanimous consent. That is always a possibility. It is more likely, however, that the debate will go on for at least two days, and perhaps longer.

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

NATIONAL DEBT—STATEMENT BY AUDITOR GENERAL

Hon. Martial Asselin: I have a question for the Leader of the Government. Yesterday, in the House of Commons Committee on Public Accounts, the Auditor General stated that the Department of Finance was not estimating the national debt correctly and that it appeared to be \$9 billion less than it is in fact. He also noted that the figures given by the Department of Finance at the end of August showed an accumulated deficit of about \$86 billion. According to the figures of the Auditor General, the actual deficit would be \$95 billion. He then stated:

From what I have been able to see, our assets should be reduced by about \$2.4 billion and our debt increased by about \$5.6 billion.

In view of the damning evidence given by the Auditor General, which can be upsetting for the Canadians who want to know about the financial situation of Canada, will the Minister of Finance review his figures? Will he check, reassess and correct them so that Canadians may know the real financial situation of Canada?

[English]

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, despite my high regard for the newspaper profession, perhaps I would be better prepared to reply to the honourable senator's question had he commented directly from an official statement made by the Auditor General. What he has quoted from appears to be a newspaper report—a fragmentary account of remarks attributed to the Auditor General.