

gram for the ensuing week or weeks, I ask honourable senators for the opportunity to explain the subject of the meeting which delayed our sitting this afternoon. The meeting was held in an attempt to work out an arrangement for the Senate to deal with the resolution on the Constitution in response to the house order adopted unanimously in a three-party agreement in the other place.

I do not have anything concrete to report to you today on that subject, except that we are discussing a draft proposal which we intend to present to honourable senators for their approval, the exact terms of which we have not yet been able to settle. Therefore, the proposal is to consider the matter over the weekend; to meet next Tuesday before our sitting in the evening; and to have something for honourable senators to consider when we sit on Tuesday evening.

I gave notice of a motion for an adjournment until Tuesday next, at 8 o'clock in the evening, and I will, therefore, be making that motion.

I anticipate that we will sit on Tuesday next at 8 o'clock in the evening and on Wednesday next at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I suggest that we aim to adjourn next Wednesday afternoon, since I do not think we will be required to sit on Thursday. I realize that this may create some problems for committees, but I do not know if that is the case.

I wish to inform honourable senators that I believe it will be in order for them to make plans for next Thursday on, since I do not believe that we will be sitting on Wednesday evening or on Thursday.

Senator Asselin: Until when?

Senator Frith: Then we would not sit until Wednesday of the ensuing week because, pursuant to its order, the House of Commons will begin its debate on the Tuesday of that week.

In compliance with the order in the other place, the House of Commons will commence the first stage of the amending procedure on Tuesday. According to the order, amendments have to be moved in the other place by the close of business on Tuesday.

As it looks now, we will probably agree to an order here, to respond to the order in the other place, under which the Senate will sit on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of that week.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): I think it would be useful to advise the Senate, if it is known, as to what plans the House of Commons may have concerning Easter recess. I have heard that after they have disposed of the amendments on April 23, as is provided in the order which deals with the Constitution package, they may adjourn until May 11 or 12, which is two full weeks. Assuming that that is what will happen in the other place, would the deputy leader tell us what his plans are for the Senate?

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, my understanding is the same as that of the Leader of the Opposition. However, the Leader of the Government in the Senate may have some clarifying comments as to whether that is what is going to take place.

[Senator Frith.]

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, that matter is under negotiation at the present time. As of this morning, there was discussion about the possibility of a two-week recess until approximately May 11 or 12. However, no decisions have yet been made. It is a subject of discussion with the opposition house leaders in the other place.

Senator Flynn: Assuming these circumstances, is it expected that the Senate will return at the same time as the House of Commons, or a week later?

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, it really depends on the work which is before us. This is a matter we will discuss with the Leader of the Opposition, and I am sure that a satisfactory arrangement can be achieved.

● (1510)

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN—
REFERENCE TO SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I believe this question was put yesterday to the Leader of the Government, and I am repeating it in the hope he might have a reply today. In the other place the reference to the Supreme Court of Canada seems to be on the appeal from the judgments of both the Manitoba Court of Appeal and the Newfoundland Court of Appeal. There is no indication that, if the decision of the Quebec Court of Appeal is rendered before the hearing of those other appeals by the Supreme Court of Canada, it will be included, or if the Government of Canada is to submit questions to the Supreme Court of Canada which might not be included in the references by the Government of Newfoundland and the Government of Manitoba.

In case a decision is rendered by the Quebec Court of Appeal, is it the intention to try to have a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada which would solve all the problems related to the constitutional package?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, as I stated yesterday, I hope to bring a detailed statement on the subject to the chamber as soon as possible. However, it is my understanding that the distinguished Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada will be meeting with counsel to discuss the issues that the court should deal with. It is also my understanding that it will be the intention to have considered as wide a range of subjects as possible. However, it is not the intention of the government to proceed, under section 55 of the Supreme Court Act, to refer the proposals on the Constitution to the Supreme Court.

Senator Flynn: It may not be necessary, but suppose the Supreme Court is in a position to deal with all the problems that could be dealt with by way of a reference under section 55 of the Supreme Court Act?

FISHERIES

GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE—CLOSURE OF HERRING FISHERY

Hon. Jack Marshall: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government which has to do with the disturbing news that the herring fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence has been closed just a few days before the official opening of the season. Could the Leader of the Government find out on what basis this decision was made, and what scientific knowledge was advanced, since scientists take a long time to decide on the stocks?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the question will be taken as notice.

Senator Marshall: In view of the fact that just a month ago, at a seminar in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, the most important topic of discussion had to do with the future of the herring fishery, would the leader also find out why, after that discussion, the scientific knowledge was not known a month before the season was supposed to open and they are taking away the livelihood of one-third of herring seiners in Atlantic Canada, particularly in New Brunswick?

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, that supplementary information will be sought. I do not have the requested information today.

TRANSPORT

PORT OF CHURCHILL—VOLUME OF SHIPMENTS

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I have a question to address to the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board in respect of the Port of Churchill. I suspect he is aware of the problem that appears to have arisen there regarding the volume of wheat available for shipment through that port, and the opinion expressed by the National Harbours Board that, unless the volume of wheat is increased, it might be advisable to consider the future of that port, and certainly its temporary closing. Could the minister report any progress on the development of such volume of grain to be moved through Churchill to avoid the difficulty that the National Harbours Board has made reference to?

● (1515)

Hon. Hazen Argue (Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board): Honourable senators, the question raised by Senator Roblin is an important one.

Last year the volume of grain shipped through the Port of Churchill was less than that hoped for. This year the outlook is certainly for a large shipment of grain to go through that port. I do not have the figures, but I believe that the Canadian

Wheat Board has stated it is able to assure that between 200,000 and 300,000 tons of grain will be shipped out of that port this year. I have held talks with the Canadian Wheat Board, and I am very much in favour of supporting the Port of Churchill in every practical way, including having the Canadian Wheat Board do everything it can, within good business practices, to see that the largest possible volume of grain goes through that port.

The Canadian Wheat Board wishes to use that port to the maximum in keeping with its duty, as the representative of the producers, to sell into markets that bring the producers the greatest possible return for their grain.

This question is being actively looked at. However, I am unable to say right now that additional grain will be shipped through that port. It is hoped that it may be possible to increase the stated amount, and to make such an announcement in a reasonable time, if it is practical.

As I understand it, the prospects for a midsummer's crop in western Canada are, in fact, excellent, and the Canadian Wheat Board is hopeful that at that time it might be able to arrange for additional shipments of grain to go through the Port of Churchill. Until there is some indication of the kind of supply that may come from this year's crop, it is not certain just how far, if at all, it may go to increase shipments through that port. That is based on the public information that it has made available.

The National Harbours Board—in other words, the Government of Canada—and the Canadian Wheat Board are really the only people who are currently standing behind the Port of Churchill. Representatives from the Government of Saskatchewan and the Government of Manitoba make many comments about the value of the Port of Churchill, but, you know, one looks for action and not only words. There should be some commitment from the provincial governments to ship products other than grain through that port. I have in mind particularly potash.

In any event, that is the Canadian Wheat Board's shipping program. The matter is under active consideration. The Canadian Wheat Board will do everything practical from a business standpoint to use that port to the fullest extent.

As far as I am concerned, as the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board, and as a farmer, I do not want to be a fair-weather friend of Churchill. Usually, grain shipped through the Port of Churchill has returned a higher price to the producers than has grain shipped through the Port of Thunder Bay. In certain circumstances, it may be more expensive to ship grain through the Port of Churchill—and it has been more expensive to ship grain through the Port of Churchill—but I feel that that port should be supported even though on some occasions it might mean a net cost to the producers; in other words, a lower final payment.

As I have stated, I believe that the Port of Churchill is good for the grain industry and is good for Canada over the long period. I hope that circumstances develop that make it possible