

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I move, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(g), that when the Senate adjourns today it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, February 24, 1981, at 8 o'clock in the evening.

Motion agreed to.

• (1410)

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

RESOLUTION FOR ADDRESS—VOTING PROCEDURE IN SENATE

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, due to the regrettable absence of the Leader of the Government, I have a question for the Deputy Leader of the Government.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): He is on government business.

Senator Flynn: Of course; where else would he be?

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): The adjective is appreciated.

Senator Flynn: I hope it will be appreciated by the government leader as well.

Senator Frith: I will pass it on.

Senator Flynn: The Prime Minister indicated in the other place that he would not allow a free vote on the Constitution resolution. Would the Deputy Leader of the Government tell us if this rule also applies to Liberal senators in this place?

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, I will have to study that question, particularly its use of such words as "allow". I will take the question as notice.

PRIVILEGE

STATEMENT BY PREMIER OF SASKATCHEWAN

Hon. D. G. Steuart: Honourable senators, I wonder if I may raise a question of privilege which I had intended to raise prior to Question Period. It deals with the statement made today by Premier Allan Blakeney with regard to the withdrawal of his support for the constitutional package. My question of privilege relates to the fact that he attributes certain actions to the Senate and to some senators. In his press release he makes a statement which I believe is wrong. I do not believe that either the statement or what Mr. Blakeney purports in the press release went on among the senators should go unchallenged.

I refer specifically to his claim to have some inside knowledge about certain pressures put on the Prime Minister by

Liberal senators with regard to section 44. He further states that under the present constitutional package, as amended, the Senate will have enhanced or increased powers.

I believe that it is out of line for the Premier of Saskatchewan to attribute any motives to the Senate, especially when his motives all along, and particularly now, are open to serious question. Why has the Premier of Saskatchewan dragged his feet? Why does he now choose not to support this package? Perhaps it is to split his party and enhance his own position, thereby saving his political hide in Saskatchewan. But that is for the public to decide.

I resent very much the statements made by Premier Blakeney on the rightness or wrongness of something which may or may not have happened or on any actions taken by senators on either side of the house. I do not think he knows what he is talking about, and he proved it when he made his statement this morning. If Premier Blakeney has decided not to support the constitutional package, that is his privilege and I do not question it. However, since he questions our motives, and since I am one of the senators whose motives he obviously questions, I believe that we have an equal right to question his motives and cast some doubt on the honesty and veracity of his statement.

I make it clear that I do not agree with his statement that the powers of the Senate, through the deletion of section 44, are in fact enhanced or enlarged. I would like to make that very clear. As a senator from Saskatchewan, I largely supported Premier Blakeney's position. I am bitterly disappointed that Premier Blakeney has decided, for his own political purposes, to back away and put in jeopardy the controls over resources for which we fought so hard and which he claimed he would support if they were included in the package. We have them now, but he has chosen to back away. He has probably put in jeopardy that power which we in Saskatchewan wanted so badly.

Hon. Allister Grosart: Honourable senators, on the question of privilege, may I suggest to the honourable senator that it is difficult to understand the question without hearing the words of the press release? Would the honourable senator read the press release, so that we may have a full comprehension of the point of privilege he has raised?

Senator Steuart: I would be delighted to read that particular part. There is a great deal in error in the whole thing. However, I will not bore the Senate by reading the whole thing, because it is a mish-mash of misinformation and questionable philosophy. I will read into the record the part to which I referred in particular. There is so much at fault that it is difficult to begin.

So we were happy with this provision, contained in section 44.

But apparently many of the senators weren't, including Liberals. Twenty of those Liberal senators, so it is reported, gave the Prime Minister an ultimatum: they said, either remove section 44, or they would break party ranks and defeat the resolution in the Senate.