

expedite this work, discussion between our officials will be required at an early date. To this end, officials of the Federal-Provincial Relations Office will be getting in touch soon with their Newfoundland counterparts to discuss arrangements for such a meeting.

Yours sincerely,
Pierre Elliott Trudeau,
Prime Minister of Canada.

• (1405)

Senator Doody: What is the date of the letter?

Senator Perrault: It is dated October 20. It was tabled in the other place by Mr. Lalonde yesterday, November 24.

Senator Marshall: The Leader of the Government mentioned that officials from the federal government will be meeting with whom?

Senator Perrault: They will be in contact with their Newfoundland counterparts to discuss possible arrangements for a meeting.

Senator Marshall: Is there any indication that the Quebec government would be involved in those discussions?

Senator Perrault: I would be pleased to seek further information on that point. The letter is all I have in my possession at the present time.

Senator Doody: Is the letter dated October or November?

Senator Perrault: The letter is dated October 20 of this year, and it was tabled in the other place yesterday afternoon.

Senator Doody: Does the government leader know if any steps have been taken to get these meetings moving?

Senator Perrault: I will seek further information. As I stated to Senator Marshall, the letter is all I have in my possession at the present time.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, this tabling should be seen in the context of the delayed answer I gave Senator Marshall yesterday to a question he had asked. While the answer I gave did not specifically refer to the letter, it did refer to the contents of the letter and the offer that was being made.

I know that Senator Marshall realizes, and perhaps Senator Doody does also, as well as many other senators, that the situation is complicated by the agreement, a private agreement. So while the right that is being given and being discussed is one that can be exercised in that frame, it cannot be exercised without being somewhat complicated by the terms of that agreement and that is a matter between the Province of Quebec and the Province of Newfoundland, separately.

At the risk of just speculating, I am sure that that, in turn, has something to do with the initiatives taken by Premier Peckford with reference to legislation he recently introduced in the Legislature of Newfoundland.

Senator Roblin: May I ask a supplementary question? In the letter as read, if I remember well, the Prime Minister stated that the federal government could not act in the normal course without reasonable proof, or words to that effect, that the exportation of electricity from Newfoundland was being presented by Quebec. My question is: In view of this request for proof, is it going to be the policy of the federal government to await the disposition of the long delayed law suit that is now in the court with respect to Newfoundland's claims, as well as the matter now placed before the courts with respect to recent legislation? Is it the policy of the government to wait until those court actions have been cleared up before it can accept the proof that it requires?

Senator Perrault: The question will be taken as notice.

BANKING, TRADE AND COMMERCE

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government), with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(a), moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce have power to sit while the Senate is sitting today and that rule 76(4) be suspended in relation thereto.

He said: Honourable senators, perhaps I should explain that the purpose of this motion is to enable the Banking, Trade and Commerce Committee to proceed at once to consider Bill C-6, the Bank Act, which was referred to it last night.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE—WITNESSES

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I had intended to ask questions of Senator Hays, the Senate Joint Chairman of the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution. As Senator Hays is not here, I will address my questions to the Leader of the Senate and ask him to get the information for me.

I should like to ask some questions about the activities of the committee. I trust I am within the rules in the way I frame them. First of all, I should like to know how many applications to be heard have been filed with the committee, and how many of these applicants have been selected to be heard. Secondly, I should like to know how many briefs have been filed with the committee.

Up to now we have heard only from associations, some of which are special interest groups. I am particularly interested

in knowing whether the committee plans to schedule the hearing of experts in the wider constitutional field?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): I do not have that information at my desk, but I shall endeavour to obtain it just as soon as possible. I note, however, that there are some members of the committee present today who represent an information resource.

• (1410)

Senator Guay: Members of the committee could probably tell us.

Senator Asselin: Senator Austin could no doubt tell us.

Senator Roblin: It would be of interest to the Senate to have a list of those who have been in communication with the committee, together with an indication as to whether they wish to submit a brief and appear as witnesses before the committee or merely submit written opinion to the committee. Perhaps that list could also indicate those who will be heard and when it is expected that they will be heard. I would ask my honourable friend to obtain that information for us.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, an endeavour will be made to determine the number of requests received for appearances before the committee. However, the Honourable Senator Roblin, who is a member of the committee, may well feel that there would be value in his asking that question of the joint chairmen of the committee when the committee next meets. We should both engage in the pursuit of the desired information.

Senator Roblin: I think that is a reasonable suggestion, and I daresay that the committee will be asked to discuss this matter. It seems to me, however, to be a matter of much wider interest than that. The depth of the subject will be apparent once we determine what the answers to the questions are. I am sure it will be discussed in the committee, but it seems to me that the Senate will have a real interest in this as well.

Hon. David Walker: Honourable senators, many of us get the impression that this Special Joint Committee on the Constitution is very similar to the Tower of Babel. We are all considerably worried about the reputation that is going across the country as a result of the fact that everyone seems so far apart on this patriation question.

Is there any chance of settling with Britain the question of the patriation of the Constitution with an amending formula? And then we can, on our own, go on from there. Anyone other than Prime Minister Trudeau would have agreed to that by now.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, as I stated yesterday, the government is awaiting, with keen anticipation, the Report of the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution, along with its recommendations, which may well be attached to that report.

[*Translation*]

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE—PROPOSED EXTENSION OF DEADLINE—CONSULTATION BETWEEN HOUSE LEADERS

Hon. Martial Asselin: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government. As Senator Roblin said a

[*Senator Roblin.*]

while ago, a great number of people want to appear before the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on the Constitution.

It is obvious that, because of the enormous task that will have to be done in such a short time, it will be humanly and physically impossible for us to complete our work by December 9.

Moreover, some kind of an understanding seems to be developing among the leaders of the various political parties in the other place, and they would appear to be on the point of agreeing that the committee hearings should be extended for a few weeks so that all those who want to appear can do so and the members of the committee can have the chance to work intelligently.

Can the Leader of the Government tell us what have been the results of the various consultations among the party leaders in the other place in this regard?

[*English*]

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I understand that a number of constructive meetings and conversations have been held involving the leadership of the parties in the other place. However, I am not aware of any final decisions to extend the length of the committee's hearings or to extend the number of days in which submissions may be brought before the committee. It is certainly possible, according to the advice I have received, that the committee may wish to bring in an interim report recommending the extension of the sitting time.

Senator Asselin, as a member of the committee, may be in a position to advise the house whether or not some formal proposal will be brought forward again in the joint committee by his party. Certainly a number have spoken in support of extended hearings.

[*Translation*]

Senator Asselin: Honourable senators, I could advise the Leader of the Government in that regard, and of course I do not blame him for not following the proceedings of our joint committee. As early as last week, members of the official opposition, supported by members of the NDP, put to the committee a formal motion asking for permission to present a report to the Senate and the House of Commons recommending that the sitting hours of the committee be extended to February 10, in order, I repeat, to allow the committee members to perform their work like intelligent people.

In addition, for the information of the Leader of the Government in the Senate, I can tell him that members of his political formation, who are in the majority, voted against the motion. Of course, the report could not then be presented to the Senate or the House of Commons.

While I have the floor on this matter, perhaps I could, for once, ask the Leader of the Government why the government is so set on that magic date of December 9. Why not the 20 or the 21? Or later, for that matter? Can he tell us whether or not there is a fundamental reason for the government's insisting that the committee complete its work by December 9? To

date, none of the interventions in committee, in this house or in the other place, justify in any way an arbitrary date such as December 9. So, can he tell the Senate what the government had in mind when it set a date like December 9, a date it will not change?

● (1415)

[English]

Senator Perrault: Well, honourable senators, it is not my intention to reopen a debate which was held in the Senate. It would, indeed, be contrary to our rules to reopen a debate on a motion which has already been decided by the Senate. But I know the honourable senator is earnestly seeking information and enlightenment, and all of us appreciate his lively concern in this matter. May I suggest that the power of his eloquence may well persuade members of the joint committee to accede ultimately to his request. The Prime Minister has stated a number of times that if evidence can be presented and justification is provided for an extension of the committee hearing dates, then certainly supporters of the government on the committee would consider such an extension. So I think it can be said, honourable senators, that the matter may not have been finally disposed of.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, could I ask a supplementary question on the same point? I recall well that when we were concerned about the question of time limits in this house we received the most fulsome assurances from the Leader of the Government that the committee would be able to make its own recommendations in the matter. Indeed, as my honourable friend has said, it has made its recommendation, which is negative.

But we were reassured again in the committee that we need not lose heart because the question would be referred to the leaders outside the committee for some adjudication. Now my question for the leader is: Has he, as a representative of the Senate, been asked to take part in those consultations?

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, as I stated in reply to Senator Asselin, it is conceivable that the final disposition of this question has not been made. Let me assure honourable senators on that point. We have not completed the hearing process in the joint committee; there are many more witnesses to be heard, and it is entirely possible for the committee to report back on December 5, or before that date, certainly by December 9, conveying its recommendation that in the light of additional briefs and additional requests received from certain associations, organizations or individuals, that the committee recommends to the Senate and to the other place that a time extension, for example, be made.

● (1420)

Perhaps it is too early to make a final decision with respect to this proposal for extended hearings. With respect to Senate participation in the process of that final determination, there will be substantial Senate involvement.

Senator Roblin: I am delighted to hear that, because there has been no evidence of it so far. The evidence so far is that the consultations have been limited to members of the House

of Commons. This is a joint committee, and when I heard members of the Constitution Committee saying that "house leaders would be consulted," I must say that in my naiveté I thought that might possibly include leaders in the Senate; but, if that is not to be, then we should be told about it; if it is to be, then why have we not been brought in on the ground floor?

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, the Senate has certainly not been excluded from this process of constitutional review in any sense. There are ten members of the Senate participating on a most active and useful basis in that committee's deliberations. In the second place, as Leader of the Government in the Senate, I participate in many of the discussions relating to that committee's activity and the position of the government with respect to that committee. Moreover, anyone who assumes that the Joint Chairman from the Senate, Senator Hays, is operating merely as a cypher who has no participation in the decision-making process is entirely incorrect in his assumptions.

Senator Roblin: My honourable friend is avoiding the question. I know perfectly well, and he knows perfectly well, that insofar as the members of that committee are concerned the whole subject has been removed from their domain and jurisdiction and has been handed over to the leaders of the house. But who are those leaders? Do they include members of the Senate? That is my point.

My honourable friend has told me quite frankly, and I commend him for his frankness, that he has not been consulted by the leaders in the other place with respect to the changing of the reporting time of this body. I would suggest that "leaders of the house" should include, with all modesty, if not myself, certainly my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition here, and his deputy when he is not here. But I can speak for myself and say that I have heard nothing of it.

I do not know why the Senate is excluded from this process in which the decisions are being made. They are not being made in the committee. The committee told us that. They are being made outside by our masters.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, I must say that I am surprised that the Honourable Senator Roblin seems to have developed a rejection complex merely because he has not been invited to a "confab" of political leaders in the other place. However, now that he has suggested that he thinks there is merit in house leaders discussing this matter, and has said so publicly and in his usual eloquent way, with the support of the Honourable Senator Asselin who spoke on it today, I will be more than delighted to meet with the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate to discuss this matter.

In this regard I do not think members in the other place will feel especially rejected if they are not invited to participate in the deliberations of house leaders. I am sure the distinguished Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate would be pleased to be part of that meeting, as I am sure would be the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Senator Marshall: The distinguished Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Senator Perrault: I do not feel that every time house leaders in the other place have a meeting, the Senate should be a party to it.

Senator Asselin: On this question, yes.

Senator Perrault: And I am sure they do not feel they should be party to everything we discuss in our meetings here. May I propose, therefore, that we have a meeting between the time we rise today and when we meet tomorrow to discuss the matter of the Constitution Committee and its reporting date.

Senator Roblin: My honourable friend, in his usual elegant style, has dragged the red herring across the trail. He knows perfectly well that we are talking about a joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons, and that no one on this side is expecting to have any input or anything to do with ordinary matters in the other house. It is a joint committee, and he knows perfectly well that I am not recommending this course because I like it. I am yielding to force majeure. We have been told in the committee that we will not have the power to decide, that it will be decided outside our ranks. That is the reason why I take such an interest in the matter.

● (1425)

Senator Perrault: As usual, the honourable senator's remarks will be given careful consideration. But there has been no directive issued that the committee shall not be permitted to decide whether or not it wishes to report that an extension of the sitting time is warranted. I know of no such directive and I do not believe that any such directive has been issued anywhere.

Senator Roblin: Does my honourable friend know that the committee has voted against extending the time? I hope he knows that much.

Senator Perrault: Because a majority of the committee voted against a certain proposal does not necessarily mean to say that a decision was taken in some other place and that some kind of order was issued to those members that were required to vote in a certain fashion. Indeed, may I offer the personal speculation that the honourable senator may be pleasantly surprised in due time when he has the full facts concerning the possibility of extending the committee times.

Senator Asselin: If you know something, say so.

Senator Roblin: I will be glad to wait. If it is worth waiting for; I shall congratulate my honourable friend upon it. But I never said that someone had instructed the committee how to vote. That is not what I said, and my honourable friend knows it is not what I said. I said that we were told in the committee that the decision would be made by the house leaders, not by the members of the committee themselves. When the protest was made, the soothing answer that was given was "Never mind, we are going to refer it to the leaders of the house and they will decide whether or not there will be any extension of time." That is the fact. I regret to report it, but it is so.

[Senator Marshall.]

ITALY

EARTHQUAKE DISASTER—SAFETY OF CANADIANS IN AREA

Hon. Peter Bosa: Honourable senators, I have two questions for the Leader of the Government. First, is he in a position to tell us whether there were any Canadians present in the earthquake area of southern Italy; and, secondly, does he have any additional information that he would like to share with the Senate?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have some further information with respect to the terrible disaster in Italy. So far as Canadians are concerned, our embassy in Rome, in its latest report—a copy of which I shall read in a moment—mentioned that the local authorities with whom they are in touch are at this stage concentrating on the rescue of victims rather than in establishing their identity. As a consequence of this, and of disrupted communications, our embassy has not yet been able to establish the safety and well-being of the relatively few Canadians believed to be in the severely damaged area. We do not have the names of those "relatively few Canadians," but those names will be provided to honourable senators as quickly as possible.

We have received a telex communication from Rome, a copy of which is before me. It is not a long telex, and perhaps it should be put on the record. It reads:

Severe earthquake measuring 6.5 on Richter scale struck Italian Province of Campania, in area south and east of Naples last night at about 1930 hours. Epicentre is Town of Eboli with extensive damage around City of Avellino. Early indications are of major disaster, placing dead in hundreds and injured in thousands. Some estimates place dead in thousands.

It is very difficult at this stage to give estimate or reports on safety of Canadians. Local authorities with whom we have been in touch are concentrating entirely on rescue of victims and not their identity.

Notices have been issued to avoid travel to Naples and beyond because of clogged facilities, damaged roads and interrupted communications.

Our preliminary contacts with MFA indicate they have set up co-ordinating group but for now are awaiting further information before making requests for assistance from either governments or private agencies.

Authorities are in any case fairly confident of disposing of sufficient emergency supplies for early stages, except perhaps for plasma and blood which are being requested through media.

● (1430)

There is, then, a course of action recommended to the government with respect to the conveying of messages of sympathy to the Italian government, and so on. The telex continues:

We are awaiting confirmation of the full extent of the tragedy, which will be known in greater detail over the next 24 hours.

There is a further note to the effect that since yesterday, the League of Red Cross Societies has launched an international appeal for emergency assistance in the stricken areas. It will be recalled that the Minister of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, announced yesterday that \$100,000 had been set aside as an initial Canadian contribution. Today, he is announcing that the \$100,000 contribution will be released immediately to the League of Red Cross Societies for emergency relief efforts in the devastated areas. In a statement, which I understand he is making this afternoon in the other place, he will say:

I wish to assure the House that we are in close communication with the Italian government and the Red Cross to determine the nature of any further emergency assistance required.

EARTHQUAKE DISASTER—ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

Hon. Lowell Murray: Honourable senators, before Senator Bosa left I wanted to draw the attention of the minister to a motion that was passed unanimously in the other place yesterday on this subject, on the initiative of Mr. McDermid (Brampton-Georgetown), urging the Secretary of State for External Affairs to consult urgently with the Italian government as to the special and immediate needs of the victims of the earthquake of the Naples-Salerno area of southern Italy, and that the minister report to the house at the earliest opportunity and advise the house on the ways in which the Canadian government is able and willing to render assistance; further, that the government consult with the many Canadians who wish personally to assist the victims of this earthquake and provide special programs which will allow the people of Canada with special ties to Italy to respond in an urgent and generous manner through airlifts, emergency relief and reconstruction. As honourable senators will be aware, efforts in these directions are being made by private groups throughout the country now.

Perhaps the minister will, first of all, want to associate himself and all of us in this chamber with both the spirit and the substance of that motion, and, secondly, to undertake to keep the Senate informed, as the Minister of External Affairs is required to keep the House of Commons informed, as to the efforts being made.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, my office is in continuing contact with the Secretary of State for External Affairs and his departmental officials, and we have requested that information, as it becomes available, be made available immediately to honourable senators. That will be done, and has been done.

Canada, with a long record of humanitarian activity in efforts to help alleviate tragedies of this kind, is in contact with Italian authorities, and Canadian help will be extended to assist those who have survived this immense human disaster, one which appears to be well beyond the dimensions at first anticipated.

THE ECONOMY

EXCHANGE VALUE OF CANADIAN DOLLAR—GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Hon. C. William Doody: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Minister of State for Economic Development.

I understand that the Canadian dollar yesterday fell below 84 cents U.S., while the bank rate, the prime rate, is still climbing. I remember a year or so ago the minister's loudly denouncing what appeared, as one listened to him, to be a continual increase in interest rates. I wonder whether, now that the situation has changed, if it is the policy of the present administration to continue with these interest rate increases, and is it the policy of the government to continue these injections of funds with the object of supporting the Canadian dollar, or is there a ceiling or level at which the government feels that it has to stop?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): Honourable senators, my friend knows very well that what he is asking is partly within the responsibility of the Minister of Finance, but mostly within the direct responsibility of the Governor of the Bank of Canada. I am sure he also understands that announcements in advance as to what actions will be taken to allow the market to float, and therefore directly affect the dollar or, indeed, any influence they may have on it with buying and selling in the market, is something that they do not announce in advance.

Senator Doody: As a supplementary to that question and perhaps for clarification, may I ask if the governor of the central bank reports to the Minister of Finance on these matters? Is not the Minister of Finance the final arbiter of interest rates, or has that situation changed?

Senator Olson: No, the situation has not changed.

Senator Doody: As a further supplementary: Last week the Minister of Finance—and I assume that this is a policy decision that is made by the Economic Development Committee of which my friend is the chairman—announced that Canadians should expect a decline in real income during 1981.

The dollar has fallen below 84 cents U.S.; interest rates are climbing; unemployment is up; and inflation is still on the rise. My understanding is that the response to all these indicators is that we have to wait for an upturn in the United States economy.

Does the minister know of any particular Canadian policies that may be put into effect to try to counter these rather frightening trends?

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, the Canadian government, at least since March 3, 1980, does indeed have some policies that will be helpful to the Canadian population in these areas. I think it has been demonstrated over and over again that, while we cannot isolate ourselves from our trading partners, we have done better than most in all of the areas my honourable friend mentioned. I think we can take some satisfaction, as Canadians, that Canada is doing better than most other countries considering these economic factors.