

Senator Roblin: May I ask the minister to find out at the same time whether there has been any request of the government for an additional gift to Imperial Oil Company Limited, that is, in addition to the \$40 million which was given to it some time ago to keep the Cold Lake project on top of the stove?

Senator Perrault: The question will be taken as notice.

Senator Roblin: Will the minister also find out whether there is any possibility of recouping that \$40 million which was given to the Imperial Oil Company Limited, if they proceed at the end of June with that project?

Senator Perrault: That additional inquiry will go forward. Certainly, the answer may indicate whether the Cold Lake project is heating up.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Could I ask the Leader of the Government whether the smile of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources resembled at all the smile of the Mona Lisa?

FINANCE

ALLEGED STATEMENT BY MINISTER TO CANADIAN NUCLEAR ASSOCIATION

Hon. C. William Doody: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. It relates to a speech reportedly made by the Minister of Finance to the Canadian Nuclear Association. The Minister of Finance was reported to have said that the government is unwilling to keep pouring millions of dollars into industries which are of benefit to only a few provinces. Would the Leader of the Government give us a definition of the government's policy on aid to industries that are in difficulty, or, at least, a clear indication of the policy?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I would be pleased to do so. Certainly, the minister's office will be contacted and, hopefully, a clarifying statement can be made here.

THE CONSTITUTION

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND MINISTER OF STATE (MINES)

Hon. Lowell Murray: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Was the Minister of Public Works speaking for the government yesterday when he advocated that municipalities be given recognition in the Canadian Constitution? I quote the minister:

Municipal government deserves and warrants a secure place in the constitution and a better share of tax resources to carry out its responsibilities.

My particular interest is in the constitutional regulation of municipalities and whether the minister was speaking for the government in that respect.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Certainly, honourable senators, in this particular instance, the Honourable Paul Cosgrove was speaking on his own behalf. However, there is the theory held by many Canadians that municipalities are entities of emerging importance in this country and that they should be accorded a greater role. That view is held by many people across a number of party lines.

The point which should be made clear is that after the Constitution is Canadianized or brought home from Great Britain, before us will lie many further opportunities to change and amend the Constitution and other matters in this country. Indeed, this intent has been expressed by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister and many spokesmen for the government on many occasions. Certainly, a consideration of the increasing importance of municipalities is one of the questions which should be reviewed by those in public life when they come to deal with future constitutional changes.

Senator Murray: If the Minister of Public Works was not speaking for the government, as the leader has just indicated, was the Minister of State (Mines) speaking for the government when she said the following:

I don't think it is necessary to have municipalities formally recognized.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, one point that should be made abundantly clear is that there has always been a great degree of freedom of speech and action in the Liberal caucus, whether it be in this chamber or in the other place. It may surprise members of the official opposition that Liberal ministers from time to time both explore and discuss publicly some of their views about the future of various institutions and programs in the country. That is not an unusual or extraordinary process, certainly as far as supporters of the government are concerned. The widest possible latitude is offered to members of our party, and that shall continue to be the case.

• (1430)

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, the doctrines of cabinet solidarity and collective responsibility exist precisely so that the Canadian people can know what the policy of the government is and can understand that, when a minister speaks, the minister is speaking not for himself or herself and giving a personal, off-the-cuff opinion but is speaking for the government.

I ask the minister how Canadians are to know when a minister is giving a personal opinion on a matter of public policy and when that minister is speaking for the government.

Senator Perrault: May I remind Senator Murray, who was one of the architects of policy for the previous government, that the then Secretary of State for External Affairs went to an international meeting and stated that there must be an enormous improvement in the degree and quantity of aid to the underprivileged nations of the world, and did so at precisely the same time as the Minister of Finance, a cabinet colleague of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, was calling for cutbacks in foreign aid? Surely the senator is not

suggesting that that was an example of Conservative cabinet solidarity?

However, in the case which he has cited here this afternoon—

Senator Murray: "Cases."

Senator Perrault: In the cases he has cited here this afternoon, the matters discussed by the minister have not been fully developed and finalized by cabinet. In the meantime, individual members of cabinet are surely at liberty, and should be at liberty, to discuss with their constituents and other Canadians their views with respect to those policies, pending a time when a cabinet decision is taken. Their freedom in that regard has always existed.

Hon. Martial Asselin: No, no.

Senator Perrault: And, may I say, this freedom seems to be in remarkable contrast to the actions which I cited earlier, the contradictory statements by the two former Conservative ministers. During the same week they made contradictory statements about a policy which surely had been adopted in cabinet.

Senator Asselin: Name them.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I don't want to debate—

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): —the irrelevancies.

Senator Murray: I do not want to debate the constitutional practice, but the reason why there is cabinet secrecy, again, is so that ministers can debate in private their differences on matters of public policy; then later, when ministers go public, it is assumed that those differences have been resolved in the secrecy of the cabinet chamber and that the Canadian people are, therefore, in a position to know that when a minister speaks on a matter of public policy that minister is speaking for the government.

Finally, without prolonging this unduly, let me ask the minister whether his colleague, the Minister of State (Mines), the Honourable Judy Erola, is speaking for the government when she says in an interview that opinion is divided among federal cabinet members on what status should be accorded municipal government. Is that the fact?

Senator Perrault: Well, honourable senators, the matter has yet to be resolved in cabinet. The other day, for example—

Senator Flynn: Why don't you say "yes"?

Senator Perrault: The other day in Ottawa, for example—and this is worthy of some consideration—the minister responsible for housing in this country, the Honourable Paul Cosgrove, convened a meeting of certain regional parliamentarians, Conservatives, Liberals, members of the NDP and others to discuss with them the future of housing policy in the country. Senators were included in these consultations. During the course of that meeting the minister suggested initiatives that he, personally, thought might be helpful. It remains to be seen whether all of the initiatives which he espouses personally

[Senator Perrault.]

will ultimately be supported by his cabinet colleagues. But this process of dialogue is surely a useful one. There is a continuing dialogue involving ministers and other members of Parliament with groups, organizations and individuals. Following adoption, of a policy in cabinet, certainly the doctrine of cabinet solidarity is in effect—as the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition indicates by nodding his head in agreement.

• (1435)

Senator Flynn: Yes.

Senator Perrault: But surely it is useful for ministers to attempt to set forth some of their personal views as a prelude to that cabinet decision-making process.

Senator Flynn: May I suggest to the Leader of the Government that he look at the question which was put to him and compare his reply with an alternative, which would have been, very simply, to say "Yes"?

Hon. G. I. Smith: He is too defensive about it.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

REVENUE GAINS AND LOSSES CAUSED BY FOREIGN EXCHANGE FLUCTUATIONS

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): May I address a question to the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board? I do not know whether he was watching television last night, but a number of us were, when the Canadian Wheat Board came under some scrutiny in the program presented by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It raises a couple of matters on which we perhaps need further information.

One of the points made was that in the middle 1970s there was a loss incurred in foreign exchange transactions in connection with sales of wheat to China on the sterling basis. The sum mentioned was approximately \$80 million. I suppose that from time to time the Wheat Board does have problems with foreign exchange, and I am wondering whether the minister can make available to us their record of gains and losses on foreign exchange—for any period he likes, but let us say for the last 10 years. That information would, I think, be pertinent in view of what was said.

Hon. Hazen Argue (Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board): Honourable senators, I am quite happy to ask the Wheat Board to supply whatever information it feels is desirable and pertinent on that question. There has been a good deal of information provided on that point. I believe the controversy is at least a couple of years old. I will be happy to have the records checked to see what information I may be able to provide for the honourable senator.

I too saw the program, and it was obviously a biased, one-sided, prejudiced attack on the Canadian Wheat Board.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh.

Senator Argue: Conservative members can laugh and giggle if they wish. Leading that attack were the Minister of Agriculture for Alberta, the Honourable Dallas Schmidt, the Minister