

I do not like the idea of restricting this mandate to only two subjects: that of collective and individual rights and that of the Senate, or a second legislative or consultative house or whatever.

I regard both subjects as important but on this side of the house we believe that the most significant issue as far as the reform of the constitution is concerned is the distribution of powers. But the committee would not be entitled to tackle this subject.

This is the main objection I expressed to Senator Lamontagne and to the others with whom I spoke on this subject. That is why, in order to allow honourable senators on both sides of the house to dwell on the subject raised by this motion, I intend to move that the debate be adjourned. By next Tuesday we will see if it is possible to reconcile our differences and to take a united stand. I therefore move the adjournment of the debate.

On motion of Senator Flynn, debate adjourned.

● (1410)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government), with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(g), moved that when the Senate adjourns today it do stand adjourned until Tuesday next, June 3, 1980, at 8 o'clock in the evening.

Motion agreed to.

THE CONSTITUTION

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE OF FIRST MINISTERS

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, may I say that in the documents I tabled today, the telex communications from the Right Honourable the Prime Minister to the premiers, the Prime Minister indicates that the one-day private session on June 9 is for laying future plans for constitutional renewal, broadly conceived in the light of new ideas and the public's desire for change.

● (1415)

He expresses the hope that first ministers can agree on June 9 on both the principles and the process which will lead them to the broad renewal of the federation.

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AGRICULTURE

DROUGHT IN PRAIRIE PROVINCES

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I should like to address a question to the

[Senator Flynn.]

Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board in respect of the drought situation in western Canada. The minister was on the prairies over last weekend and I believe made a survey of the situation on behalf of the government. Is the government now ready to announce the assistance policy that it may have in mind, either for individuals or for the provinces?

Hon. Hazen Argue (Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board): As Senator Roblin has said, I was in Saskatchewan over the weekend and I have some information on the drought situation, which is generally available to all senators in any case.

A large part of Alberta has received some very welcome and beneficial rains; there have been some scattered showers in Saskatchewan. Some local areas have received quite a good rainfall, but Saskatchewan generally is still very dry; Manitoba is indeed very dry. That is the information I have, so it is a critical situation.

The attitude of the federal government is that it will help in every way possible. It wishes to help in an imaginative and generous way. However, as the Honourable Senator Roblin will know, when you are formulating a policy it has to go through the various stages of consultation and deliberation. Initially, on my own initiative I think I can say, through others—it was not my responsibility but it was my initiative—the federal Task Force on Drought, which had been in existence since 1977, was activated some weeks ago. Last Sunday a cabinet minister was presented with draft proposals, or a series of draft suggestions that they had to make. On Tuesday of this week there was a meeting of officials in Ottawa to consider specific recommendations on this particular question. Today I believe there is a meeting at the deputy minister level on this question. The policy, I believe, will be before the Economic Development Committee, of which Senator Olson is chairman, next Tuesday.

Senator Roblin: Careful.

Senator Argue: He gets questions every day. I do not think it is because you don't know his exceedingly important role in the cabinet. The matter will be before Senator Olson's committee. I am sure it will receive most sympathetic consideration, and probably some suggestions for improvements. I am sure it will be expedited, so I would hope and anticipate that by next week a formal policy will be announced. It is perfectly clear that the federal government is prepared to take action, and in fact some action has already been taken, but those are the plans.

Senator Roblin: I have one or two supplementary questions I should like to ask, if I may. In the course of recent events, has the minister had an opportunity to visit with the agricultural ministers or the Premiers of Manitoba and Saskatchewan to concert his policy with theirs?

● (1420)

Senator Argue: I have not visited with any of them. I have been engaged in other matters.

Senator Roblin: Has anybody visited with them?