

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I have already answered the question inasmuch as there was a question. It is clear that the honourable senator wishes to debate the matter. I invite him to do so during the course of the debate on the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

GRAIN HANDLERS' STRIKE-LOCKOUT—PROGRESS OF NEGOTIATIONS

Hon. Hazen Argue: I have another question relating to agriculture: Can the minister tell us whether or not there has been any progress in the negotiations to end the grain handlers' strike-lockout at Thunder Bay? Does the leader have any indication that Mr. Kelly, the federal mediator, is making any progress in that strike-lockout at Thunder Bay?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): I am advised by the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Pierre Cadieux, that the latest reports from Mr. Kelly are somewhat encouraging.

Senator Argue: I do not like getting political, because I do not have a political nature, but is the leader not aware that when there was a similar situation threatened in 1981 the Minister of Labour of the day, the Honourable Gerald Regan, appointed Bill Kelly to help mediate the threatened strike ten days before the strike took place? That strike was settled 16 days into it, but it took this government almost four weeks to appoint the same Bill Kelly to deal with a similar situation.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, the government is perfectly ready to defend the steps it has taken and the time it has taken to take those steps after this matter has been resolved. Again, I invite the honourable senator to debate the matter at the appropriate time.

Senator Argue: But why did the government take so long to appoint Bill Kelly? Why did the government let the strike drag on for four weeks at an enormous cost when, if Mr. Kelly had been appointed earlier, I am certain the strike-lockout would have been over long ago?

● (1450)

Senator Murray: Well, I am interested to have Senator Argue's certainties recorded for posterity, but I tell him that the government is perfectly prepared to defend its position on this matter and we will do so at the appropriate time when this matter is resolved—which I hope will be soon—and I invite him to join the debate. Either I or one of my colleagues will speak on behalf of the government on this matter.

INDUSTRY

AEROSPACE—ALLOCATION OF CF-18 SERVICE CONTRACTS

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat: Honourable senators, before I ask my question of the Leader of the Government, I would like to join my colleagues in expressing my sincere congratulations to him. He is taking on a major challenge—particularly in the

[Senator Argue.]

field of federal-provincial relations. Those of us from the smaller provinces have a very particular interest in that area, and I certainly wish him well.

He will not be surprised, however, if I, as a Manitoban, express some regrets at the departure of Senator Roblin from that post. I have had the pleasure, or you might say the challenge, of trying to elicit information from Senator Roblin for some 30 years as we have sat across from each other, and I will miss that opportunity.

Hon. Duff Roblin: With most reasonable influence.

Senator Molgat: I will now come to my question. There was a good deal of discussion earlier this year about the awarding of the contract for the overhaul of the CF-18 aircraft. All indications were that the Bristol Aircraft Company, in Winnipeg, was to get that contract. Recently there have been a number of speculative stories which indicate that this is not to happen, that the contract will be going to Canadair in Montreal. I wonder if the minister can give us any information on the matter, where it stands, and also if he can tell us when it might be resolved.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, my information is not very current on that matter. I shall look into it and report back to the honourable senator.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

PROPOSED LEGISLATION—ANTICIPATED DATE OF INTRODUCTION

Hon. Dalia Wood: Honourable senators, my question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Yesterday in the Speech from the Throne there was mention of legislation with regard to the Official Languages Act. Can you tell us when we can expect this legislation, please?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): I can only say that it will be brought forward in the course of the current session of Parliament.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

ALLOCATION OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault: Honourable senators, I neglected to mention, when I was first on my feet this afternoon, the fact that we have a new Leader of the Government in this chamber, and I, together with my other colleagues, want to join in wishing the new leader every success in his post. We also wish to thank the distinguished former leader who did such a proficient job on behalf of the government. Defending the government is a difficult task these days, and I do not underestimate the challenge it poses.

I have a brief question. During this summer one of the Conservative members of Parliament from British Columbia, Mr. Robert Wenman, of the Fraser Valley, aspired to become the new Premier of British Columbia. He ran for the Sacred