

The honourable senator will be aware that a summit is scheduled for Vancouver. That situation changes from hour to hour, but my information, which is about an hour old, is that plans are still going forward for the Vancouver summit.

We are, as I say, reviewing our own assistance to Russia, and we are in close contact with heads of government and ministers of other governments about action that can only be taken jointly with them. There is, for example, the question of rescheduling of debt. The forum for at least part of that is the so-called Paris Club, as the honourable senator knows. There is the work that must be done by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In summary, I can say that, first of all, Canada has been at the forefront in the multilateral effort to assist Russia. On a per capita basis, we are second only to Italy and Germany in the amount of aid we have provided, so we have delivered on the commitments that we made. However, there are discussions going forward, and we are reviewing our own position and that of our friends and allies with a view to helping support the beginnings of a democratic government and a market system in Russia.

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, there is quite a heavy background buzz going on in this chamber at the moment.

Senator Doody: There are a lot of private meetings.

Senator Olson: Yes, and they are causing me some problems with hearing. I did not quite hear the minister say whether or not the shipments of grain had been fully resumed. I think he said something about whether or not we had started to ship grain again. Did he say that the shipments had been fully resumed, or that the government was still considering the matter?

• (1450)

I was not criticizing the Canadian government for this. I only wish to know the facts.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, we undertook to ship about a million tonnes of grain. More than half of that has already been shipped. We halted the shipments because Russia fell seriously in arrears to us, while they were paying other suppliers. However, we are reviewing that situation and our decision on it will form part of an overall approach that we would take, both singly and in cooperation with our friends and allies who are also in a position to help.

Senator Olson: I take it, then, that it is still in a state of review? The shipments have not yet been resumed?

Senator Murray: No.

THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

STATUS OF LEADERSHIP CONVENTION

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I understand that the Progressive Conservative Party's Convention is scheduled for June 9, 10, 11 and 12. Since it might have some influence or effect on our legislative calendar, could the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell us if there is any news of the possibility that that convention will not go forward and that the coronation — the passing of the sceptre and the crown and perhaps the placing of ermine on the shoulders of the chosen one — might take place without a convention. In such a case, our legislative calendar and the election date might be affected.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, a number of most worthy candidates have already indicated their intention to seek this coveted prize, the national leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Senator Frith: A well chosen adjective, sir.

Senator Murray: I expect that others will be entering the contest before long. The convention will go ahead as scheduled.

Senator Frith: Are there any senators in the running?

Senator Murray: Not yet. But those who may be thinking of it would do well to read the book on Sir John Abbott and Sir Mackenzie Bowell, who were the last two senators to make it to the Prime Ministership.

Senator Frith: But they did make it.

Senator Murray: The only news I can offer on the political front is to note with pleasure the change in the seating arrangement today and to say that the two friends who were sworn in today will not for long be the most junior senators in this place. We expect to fill up a number of those vacant seats to the left of Mr. Speaker before too long.

Senator Frith: Are you suggesting that you do not have a choice — the choice that a former Prime Minister was told he had? Is this the Mr. Mulroney who will be making these appointments, the very same one who criticized Mr. Turner?

Senator Murray: It is his responsibility.