

committee for the purpose of giving consideration to such extensions.

I am also glad to say that it was made quite clear—and again the steering committee will be looking into this—that we do expect to receive more briefs and to have other witnesses come forward. Contrary to the previous decision of the committee, it now appears that there is a possibility that private citizens will be able to present briefs in addition to those representing organizations. This could be a valuable change in the plan of operation as it would, no doubt, permit expert witnesses to be called to testify.

In light of the terms of reference, which instruct the special joint committee to consider the suitability of the government's action in this respect, it is quite obvious that questions of legitimacy and constitutional propriety, and, indeed, of the effect of court applications, are proper subjects to be discussed. Certainly, in my opinion, they are proper subjects to be discussed by this committee.

The committee, I submit, will not be able to fulfill its mandate unless it has an opportunity to do these things. So, I am cautiously optimistic that the committee's previous decision not to hear expert witnesses will now be reconsidered. That is certainly my hope.

It is for those reasons that I have some interest in seconding this motion. I am also interested in the fact that the date of February 6 was the date originally proposed by some opposition members of the committee as being the proper date to which to extend the committee's hearings. Whether we will be able to complete our business by February 6 is still, to my mind, an open question, but we will have a much better chance to do so than under the unrealistic deadline of December 9.

While I am on my feet, I wish to refer to an interchange which took place last Tuesday between myself and the Leader of the Government in the Senate with respect to the status of the Senate in these proceedings. I pointed out to the government leader that the matter had been referred to the house leaders by the committee and that it appeared at that time that that did not include the house leaders in the Senate. I asked the Leader of the Government in the Senate about that, and in reply to me, as reported at page 1305 of *Debates of the Senate* of Tuesday, November 25, he said:

With respect to Senate participation in the process of that final determination, there will be substantial Senate involvement.

Perhaps the government leader could report to the Senate exactly what that involvement consisted of.

He went on further to say:

However, now that he has suggested—

And I think he was talking about me at the time.

—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.

I should like to know whether such discussions took place between these two leaders.

It seems to me that if we let the matter of a joint committee's procedure with respect to reporting back to the two houses go without remark when the Senate has been overlooked, at least to some degree, we would not be serving the interests of the public in the matter. So, I would ask the government leader to tell us what the "substantial Senate involvement" was in the final determination, and I would also ask him whether there was any consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, as his statement indicated there would be.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Let me say, first of all, that I know that all honourable senators welcome the decision taken by the members of the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution to recommend that the hearings of the committee be extended until February 6—

Senator Roblin: They did not do that; they recommended that they not be extended.

● (2010)

Senator Perrault: But the decision to extend the hearings was taken in the other place.

Senator Roblin: Not by the joint committee.

Senator Perrault: I can assure honourable senators that the decision in the other place to extend the time in the ultimate, had the support of the government supporters on the joint committee.

Senator Roblin: That is not the way they voted.

Senator Perrault: Secondly, I want to assure every member in this chamber that the views set forth by honourable senators during the course of debate and Question Period here were brought to the attention of the government. I reported to the government the general consensus of senators that the joint committee reporting date be extended. I stated that in my opinion my recommendation represented the view of both the supporters of the government in this house and representatives of the official opposition. As I inferred in a reply given me last week, consideration was being given then by the government to the possibility of an extension of committee hearings. I was very much involved in the discussions which took place in cabinet, and in discussions with certain members representing the government in those committee deliberations. I know that honourable senators welcome the fact that a positive decision has now been taken in the other place.

I regret that the Leader of the Opposition and I were not able to get together for a discussion during that period of time, but the ultimate result, I believe, has more than met the expectation of the honourable Leader of the Opposition and his deputy.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Not exactly. If I recall correctly, the motion we made when we were