

that the government made its decision on the basis of the best information available.

Is it unreasonable for me to ask him where that information, with respect to the portfolio of assets, came from? Where did the information come from, which classed it as the best in the view of the government? The minister himself? Where did it come from? That is what I want to know. Surely, I do not need the Governor of the Bank of Canada to tell me what the minister said in the Senate this afternoon.

Senator Roblin: I am going to stick to my guns, honourable senators, because the point of the matter is that while I am able to give a general statement on government policy, which it is my duty to do, and to say in that general statement the basis on which the action was taken, which I have done, if one wishes to examine the matter in detail and find out exactly what transpired—who looked into this, what answer they gave, and what tests were applied, which are all questions which would certainly interest honourable senators—it is not reasonable to expect me to be able to answer in detail, and I tell my friend that I am not.

Hon. D. G. Stuart: Who told you? Somebody must have told you.

Senator Roblin: Come to the committee. If Senator Stuart has a question to ask, I will be glad to answer him.

Senator Stuart: Who told you? That is all we want to know. Who told you that this was the best information available? Someone must have told you. You did not invent it. Who told you?

● (1420)

Senator Roblin: Oh, well, that is an easy question to answer. The minister who appeared in this chamber told me—that's who told me. If honourable senators want to know the authority for that statement, as far as I am concerned it is the departmental brief that was authorized by the minister which formed the basis of my remarks, subject to those caveats which I took the occasion to put in on my own behalf. If honourable senators want to question that minister or her officials or anybody else, then I think we could certainly make arrangements to bring that about. Such an arrangement is within our power to make.

Senator Stuart: Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question. If this is what the minister told the Leader of the Government, did he just take that information for granted? Did he not question her? Is it a simple matter of her telling the government leader what he should say in the Senate chamber? Does the Leader of the Government come in here to parrot whatever she said? I repeat: Did he not question her? Did he not ask the source of her information?

Senator Roblin: I am in the habit, honourable senators, of taking the information that is given to me by my colleagues as being accurate and correct.

Senator Stuart: What a mistake!

Senator Roblin: I have never considered it part of my duties to act as an inquisitor, to go behind them and ask for their departmental briefs or anything of that sort. I would be very

surprised if, when my honourable friend was in the cabinet in Saskatchewan, he did not find it useful to accept as being correct the statements made by his colleagues. That is certainly what I did here, and I make no apology for it.

As I have said, the minister was here and senators were in a position to ask such questions as occurred to them at that time.

I am not trying to get away from the fact that we have a serious problem here, and I am not trying to get away from the fact that honourable senators want and are entitled to information about it. I am simply trying to suggest the best way to get it.

Senator MacEachen: Honourable senators, I simply want to ask one other question. The Leader of the Government has said that in March the government acted on the best information available to it, and he has refused to identify the information or its source. I should like to ask the minister this: Does he still, on September 18, 1985, believe that that was the best information available?

Senator Roblin: When my honourable friend is in committee and has a chance to ask his own questions and to make up his own mind, I will then be interested to see his reaction to that question, because it is not a question that I have any intention of answering at the present time. It is something that will emerge from a discussion in committee.

Senator MacEachen: I think we can only become increasingly bewildered at the inability of the Leader of the Government to explain his own statements this afternoon. It would be one thing to interrogate him on what had been said by another person, but he himself is now unable to clarify what he said this very afternoon. Presumably, he now expects me to summon him to the committee to ask him whether he thinks that the best information available to the government in March was, in retrospect, and in fact the best information available. He now says that he is not going to answer my question—that I should go to committee. What a farce.

Senator Roblin: It is too bad that my honourable friend does not listen more carefully to the answers that are given in this house or to the questions that are asked. Senator Stuart asked me who gave me the information. He asked: What information was available? I said that the best information available to me was that offered me by my colleague. I am not trying to dodge that question; I have answered it. I am saying that if any honourable senator wants to go beyond that and ask my colleague the basis of the advice which she gave me, that is what he can do.

Hon. John M. Godfrey: Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question. I have been informed that officials of the Toronto-Dominion Bank thought that the best information available could be obtained through their sending in 40 of their people to inspect the portfolio of the bank. They had arranged to do so and, just prior to or during the weekend when the government intervened, they were prevented from doing so on government orders.

What I want to know is this: Is that true? That is a simple question of fact. Secondly, if it is true, why did the government