

particulars, the arrangements for that amendment were made in secret between the provincial government and the federal government, if my memory is correct. Other senators from Manitoba can correct me if I have misstated the fact, but I believe that negotiations were carried on in advance before there was any public announcement of what was intended.

Senator Frith: Or parliamentary?

Senator Roblin: Or parliamentary for that matter.

Senator Frith: Were senators consulted?

Senator Roblin: I am not sure whether senators were consulted. I was not, because I was sitting in the opposition. Perhaps some senators who were on the government side at that time were consulted but I do not know. All I know is that we have a new Constitution and a new situation and the question of how amendments should be arrived at is, perhaps, an open one. Frankly, I should tell my honourable friend that I am prepared to talk about what is the best way to do it. It seems to me that there is a reasonable ground for the course that the government is taking at the present time.

Coming to Senator Stewart who is interested in the provisions that govern the extension of the life of Parliament in situations of national emergency, I am not at all sure whether those provisions will be directly affected by any changes in the powers of the Senate, because at the present time we do not know what those changes might be. However, I think it is a point that should not be lost sight of and I, for one, will ensure that this particular matter is brought to the attention of those who are concerned if it seems appropriate to do so.

Senator Le Moyne asked me for a statement about the reaction of the premiers. Of course, that I cannot give. The premiers themselves will tell us what they think of any negotiations that are going on and I must respect their right to do so.

Senator Frith: When you say "I," do you mean the government?

Senator Roblin: Yes, the government. I mean to say it would be wrong of me as a member of a government to come into this chamber and announce the policy decision taken by the Premier of Manitoba. I might feel that I knew what it was, but until he makes that statement himself I do not think it is appropriate for me to second guess what he is going to say. The point I am trying to make is that the provinces will speak for themselves.

I like Senator van Roggen's idea that we should give some thought as to the type of amendments on which we might find a consensus in this chamber. It may be that there are issues of that kind. I want to assure my friends, as I will say when I get to a statement that I want to read to you, that there will be an opportunity provided for members of the Parliament of Canada on either side of the aisle in both the House of Commons and the Senate to consult on whatever is proposed in order to see if a large measure of agreement can be secured in that way after we have determined whether or not there is sufficient provincial consensus for us to proceed. It is a practi-

cal idea. It is in keeping with the collegial and consultative nature of this body, and I hope that we can do something about that.

Senator Croll asked whether there were any inducements on the table for the provinces to do what the feds want them to do. To the best of my knowledge, no. The issues that are being discussed are being discussed on their merits only as far as the federal government is concerned, and it certainly will stay that way.

I now come to some of the points raised by Senator Frith, and I think they were also raised by the Leader of the Opposition. He inquired as to what part I had to play in the events that have led up to these negotiations with the provinces of Canada. Insofar as decisions were made by the cabinet, I had my share in collaborating in arriving at those decisions. Further than that, of course, I cannot go. What those proposals are is now a matter for discussion between the federal government and the provincial governments, and I am sure in due course if there is a consensus as to what should be done, we will be laying that matter before Parliament.

As for my views on the matter, I cannot give private views. My friend knows that I am bound by the principle of cabinet solidarity and unless I resign from the cabinet I respect those rules. I am still in the cabinet so I am not able to give any opinion to my honourable friend on matters of that sort.

Senator Frith: What were those matters?

Senator Roblin: You asked me what my private views were. I am telling you that I am not giving any private views.

I am interested in the attention paid by my honourable friend to the Minister of Justice, Hon. John Crosbie, who certainly in his first comment was none too flattering of the activities of the Senate. I am glad to say that he was, as is sometimes the case with him, speaking for himself in his own inimitable way. He went on to say that he felt sure that the Senate could perform a useful function if it was more in tune with democratic times and he did not want to foreclose anything. I think I am going to have to forgive him if he was a little harsh on the Senate when he started out because he wound up by indicating that there was a place for this body and that he could find it in his heart, if he was confronted with a suitably reconstructed Senate, to support it.

These seem to be the points that I noted. Senator Frith asked me again what the provincial premiers have to say. I must answer that by saying that they will inform the country themselves when they have made up their minds as to what they think about it. The Leader of the Opposition asked me what my involvement is, and I told him that I am involved as a member of cabinet and that is as it should be.

● (1450)

In order to be more specific about the position I am taking, I should like to say something that is in the nature of a government announcement which deals with this whole matter. It repeats some of the points I have already made, but puts them in a little more authoritative manner than just hearing