

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Nothing.

Senator Flynn: You are only bringing in hot air, provoked by Senator Bosa.

Senator Perrault: I felt that I spoke on behalf of all honourable senators when I suggested that the Senate is prepared to assist in the parliamentary process to the best of its capacity and ability. I know that this view is held by the Leader of the Opposition, and I hope that he does not misunderstand what I have said.

● (1425)

Senator Flynn: It is not that I misunderstand, but that you are not minding your own business.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, I fail to understand how the Leader of the Opposition can take umbrage at what I have said. I said that I have made known to my cabinet colleagues the willingness and the preparedness of the Senate to initiate various government measures, should this process be made possible.

Senator Flynn: The question is as to when you did that. It should have been done four weeks ago, because we have been doing nothing since we returned at the beginning of February. We have produced nothing but hot air and empty words.

Senator Perrault: The Leader of the Opposition may have been doing little beyond orating from time to time, but many honourable senators have been occupied working very diligently on behalf of this country. I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that the willingness of the Senate to initiate bills and to be of any help to this parliamentary process has been reiterated time and time again by the Leader of the Government.

Senator Flynn: Without results.

Senator Perrault: And I hope he did the same thing when he served for that mercifully brief period under Mr. Clark.

Senator Flynn: But it has all been without results. How many bills have been obtained from the government to be initiated in this chamber?

Hon. George J. McIlraith: On a point of order—

Senator Flynn: Senator McIlraith, if you want to raise a point of order, then stand up and raise it.

Senator McIlraith: Honourable senators, I am very glad to stand up and raise my point of order.

Senator Flynn: Then go ahead.

Senator McIlraith: I hope that the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate will listen to me as I make it. We are now on Question Period, which is the period that permits honourable senators to obtain information from ministers here and, to a certain extent, from chairmen of committees.

Senator Flynn: That's right.

Senator McIlraith: But subject to that qualification, "from ministers," that presupposes asking questions and getting answers.

[Senator Flynn.]

Senator Flynn: Is that the point?

Senator McIlraith: The Leader of the Opposition did not avail himself of this opportunity. He went on to debate—well, that is on the record and I leave it to honourable senators to assess—with the Leader of the Government in the Senate some private views he holds. This, of course, is not the purpose of Question Period.

I hope that we can get to a situation soon where Question Period, which is so valuable and important to our parliamentary system, is used by honourable senators for the purpose of obtaining all the information possible from government ministers, rather than to make speeches and to debate other matters. I feel very strongly on the subject, and I believe that I am raising a legitimate point of order because the rules have been abused today.

Senator Flynn: By whom?

Senator McIlraith: I do not wish to name honourable senators, but I will if the Senate wishes me to.

Senator Flynn: Make your point clear. Are you referring to me or to the Leader of the Government?

Senator McIlraith: I am referring to you, your desk-mate and to parts of an answer given to a question.

Senator Flynn: That's fine.

Senator McIlraith: I want to make that very clear.

Senator Flynn: Well, please make it clear.

Senator McIlraith: I am confining myself specifically to the point of order because I believe the right to have a good Question Period and to ask questions of and receive answers from ministers, in particular, is a very important right of all parliamentarians, and I do not wish to see it abused.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Flynn: Honourable senators, on the point of order, I would draw to the attention of Senator McIlraith the fact that this matter was raised by Senator Bosa and subsequently abused by the Leader of the Government. Senator McIlraith should have the courage occasionally to raise a point of order when his leader, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, is abusing the rules—

Senator Perrault: Absolute nonsense.

Senator Flynn: —by not answering questions and dealing with matters that are not relevant to the Senate. If the honourable senator has the courage to state that what I have said is so, then I will accept his point of order.

Senator McIlraith: Honourable senators, I hope I made it clear that the rules pertaining to Question Period apply equally to those who answer questions, whether they be ministers or chairmen of committees, and those asking questions.

Senator Flynn: You should have said that before; you simply referred to me. If you had said that it applied also to the Leader of the Government, then I would have accepted your point of order.