

motion to that effect in the Senate, I can tell him that I am, and will be doing so in due course.

Senator Frith: It took just over an hour to get that.

STATUS OF NORTHLAND BANK

Hon. Hazen Argue: Could the Leader of the Government in the Senate inform this chamber as to the status of the Northland Bank, bearing in mind the difficulties it is in?

As the leader will understand clearly, there are many investors in that bank in western Canada, and that bank may be in a state of demise already. Is there still some hope that there can be a salvage package or a new arrangement—and I hate to use those words—or a merger with some other larger and better equipped financial institution so that that bank may remain a functioning organization?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): We are faced with exactly the same problem with that bank that we were facing with the CCB last March; exactly the same problem.

What has happened in the interval, of course, is that last August the Inspector General of Banks said that the Northland Bank was no longer a viable operation. That triggered the action the government is obliged to take under the statute.

As my honourable friend is aware, the government is trying to find somebody in the private sector willing to take on that bank under certain terms and conditions in order to allow it to continue as a viable enterprise in one form or another—that is, either independently, in amalgamation, or in some sort of association with other financial institutions.

According to my information, there has been some interest shown by more than one party, but it is quite impossible for me to say at the moment whether any of these expressions of interest will mean the salvation of the bank, which my honourable friend hopes for and which I hope for. I think the bank is in deep trouble and it will take a great deal of negotiation to get it out of trouble. I make no prophecy whatsoever as to the outcome of those negotiations.

Senator Argue: The important part of the leader's reply is that negotiations are still ongoing.

Senator Roblin: Yes.

CANADIAN COMMERCIAL BANK AND NORTHLAND BANK— SENATE STUDY—WORDING OF RESOLUTION

Hon. John M. Godfrey: With respect to the reference to the Banking, Trade and Commerce Committee, is the Leader of the Government in the Senate prepared to consult with the Leader of the Opposition on the wording of the proposed resolution? I ask that because it is very important.

Senator Flynn: How do you know?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I am going to start my consultations with the chairman of the committee because they have a number of items

before them for reference. It may be that that covers this particular issue although I am not certain of it.

With respect to consulting with the Leader of the Opposition, I will always talk to him on any topic whatsoever.

Senator Walker: You are long suffering.

Senator Roblin: I am not entirely sure that he wants me to talk to him, but if he is willing to talk, then I am certainly willing.

Senator MacEachen: I would be delighted to talk.

● (1500)

CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

APPOINTMENT OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hon. Robert Muir: Honourable senators, when I sat on the other side, time and time again I raised the question of when members of the board of directors of the Cape Breton Development Corporation would be appointed. However, I was not too successful in receiving an answer. Now that I have been sitting on this side for the past year, may I ask the Leader of the Government if there was an announcement made yesterday or today as to when we are going to have a board of directors appointed? Are those in charge still having their meetings in their bathrooms looking at themselves and talking to each other rather than to board members?

Senator Hicks: You are no more successful on that side than you were on this side.

Senator Muir: I shall ignore that comment from the distinguished senator on that side.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, Mary Tudor had the word "Calais" engraved on her heart and I think the name of Senator Muir is going to be engraved on mine. I do not have an answer to that question yet. I shall make another valiant effort to try to get the answer he seeks.

SYDNEY STEEL CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR ANSWER

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, while the Leader of the Government is in Cape Breton finding the answer to Senator Muir's question, will he try to get an answer to the question I asked months ago about the Sydney Steel Corporation?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Yes, I shall. I should tell my honourable friend something that he will be interested in, namely, that further measures in connection with the Cape Breton situation may well be possible. The subject is under discussion and we are not completely satisfied that we have the best formula to help that community recover itself.

Senator MacEachen: That is what I said earlier.

Senator Roblin: No, it is not.

Senator MacEachen: I am glad you caught on.