

I do not object to the honourable senator raising these points at this time, and I accept the reproach to the extent that it may be valid. Frankly, I do not think it is a very big deal.

I want to be clear so far as Senator Rizzuto is concerned.
[Translation]

I take it, if I am not mistaken, that Senator Rizzuto suggested that we adjourn this debate so that I may be able to answer his questions tomorrow.

Senator Frith: That is right.

Senator Murray: Well, I am in a position to answer right now by saying first that there will be a co-chairman from the Senate in that special joint committee. Senator Rizzuto would like me to give him the assurance that this co-chairman will come from the Liberal ranks. I think that is going a little too far. I cannot speak for the committee which will have the last say in the choice of both co-chairmen. This is as far as I can go. There will be a co-chairman from the Senate. It will be up to the committee itself to select both co-chairmen.

Senator Frith: A special joint committee with a Commons, a government majority.

Senator Murray: This should not come as a shock to my honourable friend. After all, my friend—

Senator Frith: That is what they called the—

Senator Murray: With respect to the allocation of senator positions in that committee, Senator Rizzuto suggested that three senators be appointed by the Liberal group, and two by the Conservative group.

This is again a matter to be discussed between the leaders in the House. Personally, I have no argument with that distribution, namely, three members appointed by the Liberal party leadership, and two by the Conservative party leadership.

Those were the three questions raised by my honourable friend Senator Rizzuto. This is my answer, and I would not be in a position to tell you more tomorrow.

● (1450)

Senator Rizzuto: I understand full well, Senator Murray.

I already feel that I know a little more than I did ten minutes ago. As you said, there will be three senators from this side of the house, and two from the government side.

I appreciate that you cannot give us an assurance as to who will be appointed as the co-chairman to represent the Senate.

That is why I wanted to get that information, because it is important for me to reach a decision as to whether we should agree with your motion. Will the co-chairman from the Senate be elected by the five senators representing the minority on the special joint committee or will the committee itself appoint the co-chairman?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, under the current procedure, the special joint committee appoints both co-chairmen.

I have co-chaired the Standing Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Official Languages

[Senator Murray.]

Policy and Programs. In that case, the Joint Committee appointed me as well as my friend Senator Corbin—

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay: They have a co-chairman from each side.

Senator Murray: —who was a Member of the House of Commons at the time.

Senator Guay: The Standing Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Official Languages Policy and Programs has a co-chairman from both sides, one Conservative and one Liberal.

[English]

Senator Godfrey: I have been here for 14 years, and this is the first time it has ever been suggested that a committee actually chooses its own chairman. The chairmen are always chosen by the leaders. Let's not kid ourselves.

[Translation]

Senator Rizzuto: Honourable senators, I realize the Leader of the Government in the Senate has a substantial input in the decisions made by the government, and I would like his opinion. I feel I must find some way of making a contribution to your motion, while at the same time we on this side of the house would have to have some measure of reassurance. I think we should let our senators voice their opinions to ensure that this committee is run in such a way that we all have a chance to express our views.

I don't mean that I have any doubts we will have a joint chairman, but we would like to have that assurance, so that when the time comes, we can make decisions more readily. If that assurance is not forthcoming, we will just have to wait and see. That is why I moved to adjourn the debate until the next sitting of the Senate, because this would give us a chance to think about it and to find out a bit more.

I would like to give the matter a bit more thought and see how we could manage to vote in favour of the motion moved by the Leader of the Government.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it your pleasure to adopt the motion, honourable senators?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed. On motion of Senator Rizzuto, debate adjourned.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is Senator Corbin satisfied with the clarification provided by the Leader of the Government or should I still take his intervention under advisement?

Senator Corbin: Mr. Speaker, I am only partially satisfied. I would say to Senator Murray, either we meet this evening in front of the Centennial Flame to burn Beauchesne or I maintain my point of order and ask Your Honour to hand down a ruling at a subsequent sitting of the Senate.

I think my point of order is sound, and I would like to have this question clarified once and for all.

Senator Flynn: Honourable senators, on the subject of this point of order, it is a fact that the rule quoted by Senator Corbin exists. However, the same rule applies in the case of