

spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and in particular, to inform this chamber as to what steps have been taken to protect Canadians from contracting AIDS through contaminated blood transfusions?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): I can tell my honourable colleague that the Canadian Red Cross is now putting into place a procedure which will provide for the testing of all blood samples. So that will eliminate or at least minimize the risk of anyone contracting that terrible affliction through blood transfusions. That is well in hand.

Also, the Solicitor General is looking at the problem that is expected by some to arise in connection with that disease and the Canadian prison system. That may be a matter on which he may take some steps.

I think that the best thing to do regarding this matter is to educate the public and provide accurate information as to the nature of the risk and what should be done about it.

While I cannot assure my friend at the moment that this is in hand in the Department of Health and Welfare, I think it is; however, I will inquire of that department to be certain.

BANKING

CANADIAN COMMERCIAL BANK AND NORTHLAND BANK— SENATE STUDY

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I have a real sense of frustration about the situation we face today in that the Senate has passed a major bill, the result of which has been a major financial disaster. Today we have been unable to receive any information from the government with respect to any of the surrounding circumstances. That is clearly the situation.

Yesterday, honourable senators, I read into the record a statement made on September 1 by the Minister of State (Finance). That read as follows:

Mrs. McDougall also announced that the government will be asking Parliament to establish a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons to examine matters relevant to the Canadian Commercial Bank and the Northland Bank.

That was a commitment of a minister of the government.

Senator Flynn: That was no commitment; someone said they would do something.

Senator Frith: Not from her.

Senator MacEachen: Obviously, from this government, the best information available turns out to be false. The minister said in March that the bank was solvent, and on September 1 she said it had collapsed. On September 1 she also said that there would be a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons established. Today the Leader of the Government has told us that there will be no joint committee established. That is supposed to be trust in government and civility.

The Leader of the Government has told us today that he cannot answer any of the questions put to him, and that there

[Senator Haidasz.]

will be no joint committee. Will he now tell us what he intends to do to give the Senate an opportunity to obtain this information and discharge its responsibility?

Senator Flynn: That is all repetition.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, from a parliamentarian of such long experience—

Senator Frith: Here goes the speech.

Senator Roblin: —we really do not expect these little demonstrations. I know that he is a reasoned and reasonable man; I know that he is a man of a great deal of experience. To berate me because the government has decided to move from establishing a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons to establishing a committee of the House of Commons is a little unfair. I have offered the Senate an opportunity, if it needs any offer from me—which it certainly does not—to have the matter reviewed by its own committee. I think he ought to consider that suggestion.

I have told him three or four times that the Senate is the master of its agenda, and that if he wants the affairs of the Canadian Commercial Bank examined by the Banking, Trade and Commerce Committee, there is nothing stopping him from doing that. When that examination takes place, he will be in a position to get answers to his questions.

To charge me with obstruction or with failure to disclose the facts is a little unfair. I have told him that those whom the committee summons will appear before it and he can ask them whatever questions he wishes. I think he ought to consider that as being a reasonable proposition to present to the Senate.

Senator MacEachen: Honourable senators, I can assure the Honourable Leader of the Government that I am not demonstrating, that I am quite frustrated. I really do not think that the Leader of the Government is doing justice to himself in assuming that he is incapable of answering any of these questions. I think he is capable of answering them. I have greater confidence in the leader than he has in himself, but he has declined to answer those questions.

I thought the establishment of the joint committee was a way out, but that prospect has now been removed. Now the Leader of the Government has told us that it is the responsibility of members of the opposition to move that a reference be made to the Banking, Trade and Commerce Committee. If I move that this matter be referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce, will the leader support that motion to facilitate its immediate passage?

Senator Flynn: Don't be silly! You have the majority.

Senator Frith: Will he or won't he!

Senator Roblin: I have tried to listen carefully to the points my honourable friend has made. There are one or two that I am tempted to rebut, but I will deal with the last point he has made. He said that I said the opposition should refer this matter to a Senate committee. I never said that. I said the Senate was the master of its own agenda. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to know whether I am prepared to move a