

Is he unaware, for example, that in January the assistant to the Minister of the Interior and chief of the secret police was made Chief Electoral Officer of Mexico for the upcoming presidential elections? Is he unaware of that? Has the government of Canada made any statement or observation about that?

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): It will all change when we have an agreement with them. They will all resign, you see. We all have human rights once we have a free trade agreement.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I am glad to have it on record that honourable senators opposite are opposed to the NAFTA and will indeed be —

Senator Frith: That has nothing to do with the question.

Senator Murray: — advocating that it, too, be torn up.

• (1350)

Senator Frith: Obviously you got to him, Senator Stollery, because he is not answering your question at all. He is making a speech. Our position is very clear. We think that it should be renegotiated. If you are talking about our policy, get it right for once. It is that there must be changes in the areas of labour adjustment and the environment. All of the things that President Clinton wants are things we think should happen, too.

Senator Murray: Otherwise they will tear up the agreement, is that it?

Senator Frith: If the Americans have that feeling, it might be necessary.

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Wait until we have the debate on NAFTA. You will find out then what our position is. Meanwhile, answer the question as requested.

Senator Murray: I certainly look forward to a debate on NAFTA, both here and in the other place, so we can find out who speaks for the Liberal Party on this matter. If we have it in time, we may even have it before honourable senators succeed in getting rid of their leader.

Senator Frith: Is there a possibility that, in the meantime, Mr. Wilson and the lame duck — or maybe “lame chicken” is a better word — Prime Minister will get together and decide what they will do about NAFTA? It does not seem as though we can get a consistent answer here.

Can we take it that, when the debate on NAFTA starts, the answer given today by the Leader of the Government, namely, that NAFTA will produce a solution to the human rights problems raised by Senator Stollery, will be repeated? Is one of the aims of NAFTA the solving of these human rights problems?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I have no hesitation in saying that there is a very close relationship between a freer market economy and a freer political regime. History has proven that. I have no hesitation in saying that at all.

Senator Frith: Do you think the Chief of Police will resign as the Chief Electoral Officer, once we have NAFTA?

Senator Murray: Further, I stand by my statement that Canada has made considerable effort, and continues to make efforts, with some success to promote an improved human rights situation and democratic reforms in that country. We continue to work on that. The best way to work on that is through the aegis of closer economic and other ties with that country. That is one of the objectives of closer economic ties, as it has been in Europe.

Senator Stollery: Honourable senators, as I said before, I think people would be stunned by the ignorance of the Leader of the Government on this subject, considering that he is defending a government which is about to enter into a profound trade relationship with Mexico.

What have the results been of these so-called attempts by Canada to assist democratic government in Mexico? I will not embarrass the leader by asking for a response to that question, since I know he will not know what they were or if, in fact, they had any result. However, I would like to know this, and it goes back to my original question: Are we not condoning that dictatorship?

I think at this point, the Leader of the Government has changed his mind in the course of these few, very short questions. He now sees that it may well be a dictatorship, in light of the fact that there has not been a fair election in that country since 1929.

Does the Leader of the Government in the Senate not think that the PRI will use the approval of the free trade agreement — if it is approved — as support for its dictatorship?

Senator Murray: No, honourable senators.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

TIMETABLE FOR DEALING WITH LEGISLATION CONCERNING NAFTA

Hon. John B. Stewart: Honourable senators, yesterday, I asked the Leader of the Government in the Senate a question concerning the government's intention with regard to the main appropriation bill. In reply, he said, in part:

As for the plans of the government after the convention in mid-June, the calendar of the House of Commons still provides that that House would sit until about June 23, if I am not mistaken. There has been no change