

workable proposition. However, if we have to wait for several weeks for the proposed legislation, that is quite unacceptable. I think it hinges upon the promptness with which the legislation is disclosed and the subject matter referred to a Senate committee.

● (1440)

Senator Roblin: I should first like to say that the government has no intention whatsoever of attempting to impose any limitations upon the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce. This government has never imposed any limitations on the work of that committee. We have respected the autonomy of the committee and the right of the committee to set its own agenda and to do its own thing, and I do not think there is a member on the opposition bench who would disagree with that statement.

Senator Frith: No, we would not, because you are only following a good Liberal principle when you do that.

Senator Roblin: When you find a good Liberal principle, it is well worth following, because there are not many of those around.

Senator Frith: You say that because you are not Liberals.

Senator Roblin: I would say, "Don't worry about that." The Senate is in charge of its agenda and its committees are in charge of their agenda, and that committee will pursue its mission as it sees fit. Personally, I am perfectly content that that should be the case and I would not like it to be understood, even by innuendo, that there is any other way in which we intend to operate with respect to this matter. That is point number one.

My friend's second question was: When do we get the bill? I can say to him that if I get out of here by 3:15 p.m. today, I will be in a better position to advise my honourable friend because this matter is receiving urgent consideration. I hesitate to make a firm promise because I am not in charge of the timetable, but I have every expectation that his limit with respect to the introduction of the bill in the other place will be met. That is my best information at the present time. If I find that that is not the case, I will advise my honourable friend accordingly.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH IRAN

Hon. Eymard G. Corbin: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Does the Government of Canada intend to re-establish diplomatic relations with Iran?

[English]

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): I must tell my honourable friend, although I am speaking entirely from my own understanding of this situation and without having had a chance to consult with my colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, my impression is that there is no

movement afoot at the present time to do such a thing. If I find that I am mistaken, I will advise my friend.

[Translation]

Senator Corbin: In this same context, can the Leader of the Government inquire why we have no Canadian representatives to look after our interests in Iran?

It seems that we still rely on the assistance of people at the Danish Embassy.

However, my information is that Canadian diplomats regularly travel between Canada and Iran. Are there things happening in secret?

Also in the same context, does Canada intend to apologize to Iran for its participation in the liberation of the American hostages? That is the essential condition posed by Iran to re-establish its diplomatic relations with Canada.

While the Leader of the Government inquires about my first question, could he also raise these two other issues which the Iranians seem to find very important?

[English]

Senator Roblin: I think I can deal with my honourable friend's points right now without any further reference. I was reminded by my colleague who sits behind me that we have not broken relations with Iran but that it has simply not been possible for our ambassador and his staff to operate there. I am looking at a gentleman who knows a great deal about international affairs, and he might corroborate what I say, or correct me if I am mistaken. The reason we are not there is because the Iranian government has demanded that we apologize for our actions in the case of the American hostages at the time that they were trying to make their escape from Iran. If I am correct in that statement, I really do not think it is very likely that the Canadian government intends to apologize for that attitude. I do not think that they should. It certainly would not carry my voice, if I were consulted about it, so I think the situation will be a stalemate until something happens to break that stalemate.

In the meantime, I think we should be grateful to other nations who protect our interests as best they can in Iran. It seems to me that we will just have to live with this situation a little bit longer in the hopes that ultimately we can find some *modus vivendi* which escapes us at the moment.

[Translation]

Senator Corbin: Honourable senators, I have a comment on the answer given by the government leader in the Senate.

In the report of the Committee on the Relations between Canada and the Near-Eastern and North African countries which was tabled in this house in June, 1985, I read on page 81 that trade between Canada and Iran has gradually increased in the last few years in spite of the fact that the two countries have not re-established diplomatic relations.

The Government leader informs me that these diplomatic relations have never been severed. The committee report mentions the break-up of these diplomatic relations in 1978-1980. Since then, they have not been re-established. There are two