

Senator Stollery: I should like to pursue my question to Senator Tremblay, which follows on last week's questioning. He says that everything took place in the normal procedure.

Senator Perrault: In the normal Tory way.

Senator Stollery: I presume—and if I am wrong I am sure the honourable senator will shake his head—that there was only one party present today when the new joint chairman was elected. So, in fact, what we have is a joint committee of Parliament that met last Tuesday after one of the joint chairmen refused to meet last Tuesday. That could happen if things took place quickly or in a hurry, and particularly since the steering committee had planned meetings for Tuesdays, but then the committee met all of a sudden on Wednesday, a day on which the committee does not meet often.

Senator Guay: It never did.

Senator Stollery: Then the committee suddenly decided to meet at the very hour the Senate was meeting on Thursday, which is certainly unusual.

The decisions which were made at these meetings were not normal decisions that are made when there are no events taking place. All of these decisions were made with only the members of one party present. That has culminated today, apparently—

Senator Flynn: Put your question.

Senator Frith: He is asking Senator Tremblay to verify what took place.

Senator Flynn: He is asking a supplementary, yet he has been talking for 10 minutes.

Senator Stollery: I want to be clear on this. Do I understand that Senator Tremblay is now a joint chairman of the committee, and that he was elected joint chairman of this committee without members of more than one party being present?

Senator Flynn: You never understood anyway.

Senator Stollery: Is Senator Tremblay now a joint chairman as a result of an election which has apparently taken place with only the members of one party being present?

Senator Perrault: Shame.

[Translation]

Senator Tremblay: Strictly and objectively speaking, I was elected chairman of the committee this afternoon by representatives of both houses of Parliament. Senator Stollery is querying the propriety of an election where one of the political parties was not represented. As far as I know, joint Senate committees are defined mainly—

Senator Stollery: Joint committees of the Senate and the House of Commons!

Senator Tremblay: In terms of representation of both houses. In another words, they are joint committees because they represent both houses of Parliament. As far as I know, there is no rule that the joint character of these committees derives from representation of the various parties. If Senator

[Senator Flynn.]

Stollery cannot agree with our traditions and institutions, I wish he would tell me what rules or constitutional practice require that the parties must always be represented. It is up to Senator Stollery, and with due respect, to the Leader of the Government, to provide an answer.

● (2050)

[English]

Hon. Nathan Nurgitz: Honourable senators, would the Leader of the Government clarify something for me? As a result of this parliamentary authority which he has cited, which I do not challenge, am I to understand that joint parliamentary committees should not meet while the bell is ringing? Is that the understanding?

Senator Perrault: It is a procedural point dealt with by *Erskine May*—I do not have the precise reference in front of me—that while the bell is ringing, committees do not meet.

Senator Smith: What bell?

Senator Perrault: The bell in the other place in this particular case. Honourable senators, I know that senators like Honourable Senator Smith know in their conscience and their parliamentary experience—

Senator Smith: I do know it, yes.

Senator Perrault: —that you should not schedule joint committee meetings when members of the other chamber are unwilling to attend for reasons which in conscience and in procedure make it impossible for them to do so. In these circumstances you should not hold meetings of a joint committee out of courtesy, out of deference and respect for parliamentary tradition and practice. Honourable Senator Smith knows that. He is just flapping his arms this evening.

Senator Smith: I don't know that.

Senator Perrault: He knows better than that. He has been around long enough to know that.

Senator Smith: I rise on a question of privilege. I don't know any such thing and neither does the honourable gentleman know any such thing, because it is not true.

Senator Perrault: You should know it. I find it very remarkable that tonight we have the Leader of the Opposition and spokesmen for the opposition advocating the merits of having a one-party committee which parades under the mask of being a multi-party joint committee supposedly representing and reflecting both chambers.

Senator Flynn: Okay! Okay!

Senator Smith: We are only challenging your nonsensical assertion of what *Erskine May* said. He does not say anything at all of the kind.

Senator Perrault: Senator Smith always descends into vituperation when his argument is weak and that, of course, is the sign of a person with a very weak position to defend.

Senator Flynn: The leader resorts to noise. That is all he does.