

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations):** Honourable senators, I do not believe I undertook to talk to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs along the line Senator Bonnell suggests. What I did undertake to do was to ask my colleague to furnish replies to those questions that were put by honourable senators during the course of yesterday's oral Question Period.

**Senator Bonnell:** I wonder if the honourable senator asked him if he was prepared to resign as Minister of Consumer Affairs. Would you convey that message to him?

**Senator Doody:** He is an avid reader!

**Senator Bonnell:** Apparently not, but there is not much sense in asking questions of our leader, because he does not convey the messages.

**Senator Doody:** Our "collective leader."

### PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

#### PROPOSED FIXED CROSSING TO MAINLAND—STATUS OF MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. M. Lorne Bonnell:** I have a further question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Can he advise the Senate whether the Prime Minister of Canada has accepted the letter of the Minister of the Environment in which he says that he wants to resign from his duties as Minister of the Environment when it comes to the fixed link to Prince Edward Island?

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations):** Honourable senators, that matter is still under consideration by the Prime Minister.

**Senator Bonnell:** Honourable senators, does the Leader of the Government in the Senate think that the Minister of the Environment can have certain duties concerning the environment in certain provinces, but have someone else look after the environment for other provinces—a kind of mixed portfolio?

**Senator Frith:** You must hear rumours too.

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, my friend will have seen the rationale—and it is an admirable one in personal terms—that my colleague, Mr. McMillan, put forward in making his request of the Prime Minister. Whether this will be accepted by the Prime Minister on administrative and policy grounds is a question for the Prime Minister to decide.

#### PROPOSED FIXED CROSSING TO MAINLAND—P.E.I. CONDITIONS PRECEDENT TO PREPARATION OF PROPOSALS

**Hon. M. Lorne Bonnell:** Can the Leader of the Government in the Senate advise me if the Government of Canada has accepted the ten points that the Premier of Prince Edward Island laid down to the Honourable Stewart McInnes as being ten points that they would accept, look into and carry out

before they would ask the contractors to prepare proposals for a fixed link?

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations):** Honourable senators, I must confess that I do not know the answer to that question; I have not seen the ten points to which Senator Bonnell refers. I am aware of the statements that were made by Premier Ghiz on the night of the plebiscite and statements that were quoted in the media a day or so afterwards, but I will ask my colleague, Mr. McInnes, whether there is any information that he can convey on that matter at this time.

### PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

#### DRUG PRICE INCREASES—REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE APPEARANCE OF DRUG COMPANY SPOKESMEN

**Hon. H.A. Olson:** Honourable senators, I should also like to ask a question arising out of the answers that the Leader of the Government in the Senate gave yesterday to a series of questions that were put by a number of senators, including me. I asked him whether or not he would support a reference to a committee of the Senate so that we could recall the spokesmen from the pharmaceutical companies to find out what their position is now and to see if we could square that with the undertakings they gave when they appeared before the Senate committee and gave what we regarded as a firm undertaking that they would not raise prices more than the CPI.

I think I understood this yesterday too, but it is even clearer today, now that I can read what was reported in *Hansard*. I asked the minister if he would support that kind of action, and his reply was:

... the committee is master of its own procedures and can do that if it wishes to do so.

Further on he said:

... it is not my habit to interfere with the work of the committees.

I did not ask him to interfere with the work of the committees. He knows, and I know, from the experience that we have had here that if the leader of the party will support a proposition—in this case, a reference to a committee—the possibility of that taking place is raised significantly.

I ask him again today if he will support a reference to the Banking, Trade and Commerce Committee so that we can recall these witnesses from the pharmaceutical companies, who gave an undertaking that they would not increase drug prices in excess of the CPI, but who are obviously doing so now.

The minister responded yesterday that this was based on one report in the *Globe and Mail*. I can tell him now that I went to a prescription drugstore this morning. If he wants absolute, positive proof of increases in prescription drugs that are in excess of the undertakings given by the pharmaceutical companies, I am now prepared to give it to him. I am asking him if he will support a motion so that we can get to the bottom of this and find out whether these people will keep their word or not.