

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Mr. Lamontagne: Honourable senators, a notice was circulated yesterday that there would be a meeting of the Committee on Science Policy when we adjourned today. I wish to announce that this meeting has been postponed, because I think that even the members of the committee will be more interested in the events of today than those of the long-term future. I might, though, propose a meeting of the committee tomorrow.

Hon. Mr. Flynn: Tomorrow? Can it be held tomorrow if the fears of my honourable friend prove right?

Hon. Mr. Lamontagne: As I said, "I might".

Hon. Mr. Bourget: In case!

Hon. Mr. Argue: Honourable senators, I wonder if I might ask a question for clarification. A number of committees are scheduled for tomorrow. Does the motion we passed mean that there will be no committee meetings tomorrow?

Hon. Mr. Langlois: Unless they have permission to sit when the Senate is not sitting.

Hon. Mr. Argue: Why wipe out the committee meetings? There is lots for them to do tomorrow morning.

Hon. Mr. Flynn: The point made by Senator Argue is worth considering. If we do not sit tomorrow, the committees which were scheduled to meet tomorrow will not be able to sit unless permission has already been given, and I do not know that it has. I should like the Acting Leader of the Government to clarify this, because even if what is expected happens tonight, dissolution may take place only at 12 noon tomorrow, or something like that. In the meantime the committees will not know whether they will be able to sit regularly.

Hon. Mr. Langlois: Honourable senators, I am in the position that I am damned if I do and damned if I don't. The usual complaint is that we recall the Senate too often.

Hon. Mr. Argue: But we are here now.

Hon. Mr. Langlois: My honourable friend the Leader of the Opposition and his colleague Senator Beaubien have voiced criticism in the past because the Senate was asked to come here when there was no legislative work for it to do. There is no legislative work for the chamber tomorrow, but a few committees were scheduled to meet. If a committee wants to meet tomorrow morning, all its chairman has to do is introduce a motion this afternoon requesting permission to sit while the Senate is not sitting. It is as easy as that. In any case, may I point out that the motion has been passed, and any debate now is completely out of order.

Hon. Mr. Flynn: It is a question of trying to help senators know where they are going and what may be expected of them.

Hon. Mr. Langlois: Apparently a few do not know where they are going.

Hon. Mr. Flynn: I am looking at the majority now.

Hon. Mr. Langlois: You are not the majority yet.

Hon. Mr. Flynn: I'm sure that we won't be the majority for a long time.

● (1410)

LAND USE

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

The Senate resumed from yesterday the adjourned debate on the inquiry of Senator Norrie, calling the attention of the Senate to the question of land use in Canada.

Hon. Frederick William Rowe: Honourable senators, I have just a few comments to make on this inquiry, but I would not want anybody to think the fact that I shall be speaking briefly on it is in any way indicative of a lack of appreciation of the importance of the subject. In my view it is extremely important, and I congratulate my colleague and seat-mate, Senator Norrie, for her initiative in drawing this to our attention. I congratulate also the other speakers who have made contributions to this particular debate.

There are one or two other facts that we need to keep reminding ourselves of in this connection. I recall the story of Mark Twain—and here I am speaking from memory—who, when somebody asked him what would be a good investment, replied, "The best investment is, of course, land." When asked why, he said, "Haven't you heard that they stopped making land some time ago?" We have to keep reminding ourselves of this, especially here in Canada. We have a great geographical expanse, an awful lot of land, but relatively few people—22 million Canadians live on one of the greatest land masses in the world—and therefore we are inclined to think we can be profligate with our land, that we do not have to worry too much about using land for this particular airport or that particular highway. This is a fallacy, honourable senators, and a very dangerous fallacy.

I suggest we need to remind ourselves over and over again that land is finite. Whether it be in China or in Canada, the amount of land available is strictly finite, and, so far, mankind has not shown any great ingenuity in increasing the amount of land available. Once land has been turned into an airport, a residential area or a highway, then it has for all practical purposes been rendered useless for anything else; the changeover is almost permanent.

I was interested in the excellent contribution that my honourable colleague Senator Carter made yesterday to this debate. He made some references to his and my native province, Newfoundland. One fallacy we sometimes run up against is that there is no agricultural land in Newfoundland. This is a fallacy which is easy to understand, because if you travel around the coast of Newfoundland, or fly over the province at 39,000 feet and look down on it, as I did only two days ago, you receive the impression that there is not very much agricultural land around. Relatively, compared with some other parts of Canada, we do not have a great deal of agricultural land. However, we do have some, but the very fact that, relatively, we have less than, say, southern Ontario, enhances its importance.

I had responsibility for the building of 65 per cent of the Trans-Canada Highway in Newfoundland, that great high-