

● (1405)

[English]

Hon. Daniel Riley: Do you want us to agree to this now?

Senator Frith: No, I am asking whether leave is granted to deal with it now, not agreement on the motion itself.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Senator Riley: No.

Honourable senators—

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, I rise on a point of order. Senator Riley said that leave is not granted, so leave is not granted. Therefore, we move on to the next order and we will have to deal with this motion at the next sitting of the Senate which will be in approximately two weeks.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Royce Frith (Acting Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I move, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(g), that when the Senate adjourns today, it do stand adjourned until Monday, December 19, 1983, at 8 o'clock in the evening.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay: Honourable senators, I rise on a point of order. Did Senator Frith say we shall adjourn until December 19 at 8 o'clock in the evening?

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, by way of explanation, the motion for adjournment, as you will have noted and has been underlined by Senator Guay, is for a week from this coming Monday. It is clear from the inquiries that I have made, and I guess it is a matter of general knowledge, that we are unlikely—in fact, it is virtually impossible—to receive any legislation from the other place next week. Quite apart from dealing with legislation, the sittings of the Senate allow for a Question Period and present an opportunity for committees to meet.

● (1410)

Under the present circumstances, committees are not in existence because the whips are meeting to consider recommendations for the selection of members. For those reasons, honourable senators, there did not seem to me to be any reason for us to come back next week.

When we resume on Monday, December 19, it is hoped that we will have the report of the Committee of Selection, which we can adopt that evening. That would then give the committees a chance to organize themselves on the Tuesday and Wednesday before we adjourn on December 21.

However, if we decide to adjourn for the Christmas recess at the same time as the other place, the following week will be a three-day week. I would remind honourable senators of the new rules applicable for this year in the other place stipulating

[The Hon. the Speaker.]

that the House of Commons will adjourn on Wednesday, December 21.

While on the subject of adjournments, honourable senators, I apologize that I cannot give any definite information regarding the length of the Christmas adjournment. Over the last year we have used the adjournments of the other place as a guide, and, as honourable senators know, the other place has just completed an experimental year with some new rules which provide, of course, for the adjournment on December 21. However, next year those rules will no longer be in effect unless the other place chooses to renew them.

The house leaders in the other place have not furnished me with a definite date on which the House of Commons proposes to resume, but, if they follow the tentative rules, it would mean they would come back on the third Monday which is January 16. In that event, my intention would be to recommend that we adjourn until the following week to resume on January 23.

However, this motion relates only to what we do next week and the week after.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Acting Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I think that the acting leader is right to be concerned that the Senate should make the best use of its time, and I concur in that. However, it seems to me that other scenarios are possible to achieve the same result, and I would ask him whether they have received consideration.

One is that, instead of postponing our next sitting to Monday, December 19, perhaps we could meet next week and do the same things my honourable friend has suggested we do on Monday, December 19, namely, receive the report of the Selection Committee, and have the committees set up and in place. I am not aware of any business that comes before any of the committees to be re-established.

If the acting leader has decided that we should return on the week following next week, another possibility I would ask him to think about is whether the Senate should meet on Tuesday afternoon instead of Monday evening. That would give senators on the Selection Committee an opportunity to meet on Tuesday morning in order to do their work which should not take too long. The remainder of the two days can be used for the various committees to set themselves up, which, I think, is really a matter of formalities, there being no business that I am aware of that would require their attention during that time.

I would propose these two alternatives to the acting leader—either we sit next week and not the following week or, if he thinks that is ill-advised, sit on Tuesday, December 20, instead of Monday, December 19.

While I am on my feet, may I also refer to his trailer concerning when we resume in January and suggest to him that, unless there is a good reason for doing so—of which I am not aware—instead of returning on Monday, January 23, we stick to our usual day of Tuesday, January 24, for resuming our sittings. Perhaps my honourable friend could tell me if I have misunderstood the work that lies ahead of us, or whether