

hole-in-the-wall business at all, and I hope—hope springs eternal—that there will be a fair chance of finding, if not unanimity, then at least consensus in this house as to what should be done.

**Senator Frith:** Honourable senators, in the recent exchanges there would appear to be two threads that seem to have been left dangling. One is that the Leader of the Government described the need for certain strengths when one entered into negotiations; but, in answer to an earlier question he said that there were no inducements being offered to the provinces and that, so far as he was concerned, it would stay that way and there would be no inducements. I can see that it is possible for those two comments to be compatible, but I wish to be sure that I understood him. In other words, when he said that there would be no inducements, I would like to be sure that he was not changing that answer when he spoke about negotiations. The only way that the two would be consistent would be that there should be no inducements, but that the government would attempt to persuade the provinces that any changes made to the Senate's powers would be in the best interests of the provinces, as distinct from any inducements.

That is the first thread that was left dangling and it should be tied up. The other is that when asked about consultations by the government with Conservative senators, Senator Roblin, as part of his answer, again took refuge in cabinet secrecy. But I do not believe that any Privy Council oath binds or inhibits him from sharing with other honourable senators what the government discussed with Conservative senators.

**Senator Roblin:** I will not be coaxed on to this treacherous ground of—

**Senator Frith:** You will not what?

**Senator Roblin:** I will not allow my honourable friend to coax me on to what I believe to be the unstable ground of who said what to whom. I will not get into that, because it is something that is not within my realm of knowledge.

**Senator Frith:** Can you say whether there was such a meeting?

**Senator Roblin:** I will not allow any of those questions at all.

**Senator Frith:** They are too tough?

**Senator Roblin:** They are not too tough—

**Senator Frith:** Then why not tell us?

**Senator Roblin:** Because I do not believe it is to the advantage of my honourable friend to do so.

**Senator Frith:** It is like the objection to Bill C-11: it is because we won't just accept it.

**Senator Roblin:** You are reaping the fruit of that activity.

**Senator Frith:** There is a little punishment here.

**Senator Roblin:** My honourable friend has to recognize that in any move of this sort there is always a catalyst of some kind. You may not think much of the catalyst—

[Senator Roblin.]

**Senator Frith:** There is a little bit of megalomania seeping out.

**Senator Roblin:** I do not believe you can call that megalomania. You could call it decent respect for the proprieties. My honourable friend asked me whether we are offering any inducements to the provinces.

**Senator Frith:** You said you were not—

**Senator Roblin:** And I am saying it again; but that does not mean that you do not listen to what the other man has to say. You do not go into a negotiation if you are not prepared to listen.

**Senator Frith:** That is a nice distinction.

**Senator Roblin:** My honourable friend can laugh. My honourable friend's government was in the habit, in my opinion, of entering into certain activities that affected the provinces without proper consultation. It seems to me that that is a habit that we do not want to follow. If my honourable friend objects to our consulting with the provinces—

**Senator Frith:** No, no.

**Senator Roblin:** If he objects to our listening to their arguments, or our being influenced by their arguments, if they are good ones, then he is not on solid ground, and I hope that he would not lend himself to any of those propositions. That is what we are going to do: We are going to listen, and if the ideas are good, we will be influenced by them. It can hardly be any other way with proper federal-provincial relations. I tell him that is the situation. I tell him that the need to get a constitutional consensus on this is, of course, one of the essentials of any progress in this matter.

**Senator Frith:** We are given no answer. "Waltzing Matilda".

**Senator Stewart:** Honourable senators, earlier I asked the Leader of the Government a specific question, but I am not quite sure what his answer was. We know that under the Constitution, in war-measures circumstances, the duration of the life of a Parliament can be extended with the agreement of 190 members of the House of Commons, even over the objection of one-third of the members of the House of Commons. We also know that the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that in war-measures circumstances the power of Parliament, whether it be in the absence of a Senate or with a Senate operating under a suspensive veto, can extend to matters normally under provincial jurisdiction. He says that the government is exploring to ascertain if there is sufficient provincial consensus to merit proceeding. I am trying to ascertain just how specific this exploration is. Does this particular point that I have raised come into his thinking at all? The answer he gave earlier suggests to me that cabinet has not even thought of this possibility. If that is the case, has it been raised by any of the provincial premiers? That is the question that I would like the leader to answer.

● (1510)

**Senator Roblin:** I repeat that I cannot tell my honourable friend what is transpiring between the provincial premiers and