

Senator Stewart: Can we take it that the government will not proceed to a prorogation and a dissolution before the main appropriation bill has been dealt with in the normal way?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, we will be bringing in a budget next month, as the honourable senator knows. Advice on prorogation and dissolution is the prerogative of the Prime Minister. I would certainly not expect prorogation or dissolution to take place under the present Prime Minister. I cannot speak for the future Prime Minister because I do not know who she or he might be.

Senator Stewart: So the government leaves open the possibility that Parliament would be dissolved before Parliament has dealt with the main supply business?

• (1500)

In other words, the government thinks it is appropriate to consider the possibility of financing the ordinary conduct of the government by means of Governor General's special warrants in that circumstance?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, the honourable senator truly is making a very long jump to conclusions. The earnest of our intentions is that we have tabled an appropriations bill, and we intend to proceed with it. I am simply saying that I do not know whether Mr. Andre has asked the opposition to cooperate in the passage of said bill before mid-June or whether we would come back here after the Conservative leadership convention, as the House of Commons is still scheduled to do.

The honourable senator will appreciate that I cannot speak about prorogation or dissolution on behalf of a prime minister who has not yet been sworn in.

YUGOSLAVIA

CANADIAN PEACEKEEPING TROOPS—STATUS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT

Hon. Peter Bosa: Honourable senators, I wonder if perhaps the honourable Leader of the Government in the Senate could elaborate further on his answer to my previous question about the military equipment that is being used by Canadian troops in Yugoslavia. I believe the articles referred to armoured vehicles that are not safe for our troops.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I gave a one-word reply to the question asked by the honourable senator, but since he has asked the question in somewhat more detail, I will make it my business to make enquiries of my colleague the Minister of National Defence.

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS

Hon. H.A. Olson: Honourable senators, I wish to ask a question of the Leader of the Government in the Senate respecting the progress, or lack thereof, on the GATT negotiations.

The Senate has not met for quite a number of days, and I realize there is a problem with the new United States administration getting its feet under the table on this matter, if that is the correct terminology. Of course there has been a very important election in France that may have some effect on the making of any progress.

Is there any progress to report? The people in Canada who are suffering drastic financial setbacks because of the actions, or lack of action, of the federal government with respect to the Export Enhancement Programs would like to be able to look forward to some relief.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, a short answer would have to be rather pessimistic. We are now between the first and second rounds of the French elections, and it would not be realistic to expect much progress to take place until the rounds are completed and a new prime minister and cabinet are sworn in in that country.

Meanwhile, as the honourable senator knows, I believe the United States fast-track authority has run out. The Clinton administration will have to go back to Congress. It is not altogether a wholly encouraging situation in which we find ourselves. The only encouraging element is that President Clinton continues to express his commitment to free trade, and his determination to conclude the Uruguay Round as has been negotiated.

Senator Olson: I understand that. Can I ask whether or not there are serious negotiations going on now, or have the activities in that regard come completely to a halt in both Geneva and Brussels?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, frankly, I think the situation is that they are marking time.

We are in touch with various countries on a bilateral basis, notably with our neighbours. I think Mr. Kantor will be here next week for a second or third meeting with the Honourable Michael Wilson, and there are opportunities to exchange information and views in the normal course of events.

However, certainly until the French election is over and the new government is sworn in, I would not expect that there would be much progress made on this matter.