

Senator Kirby: My surprise does come, however, in looking at the way in which the Leader of the Government in the Senate argued his position today. He made a series of arguments which I must say I found incredibly strange, one of which was—and I believe Senator MacEachen touched on it—that he seemed to claim that he had to introduce the motion we are debating now because the committee had adjourned to the call of the Chair and that he had no way of knowing whether or not the committee would ever meet.

I apologize for not having a copy of the leader's remarks, but I believe that that is the essence of the position taken by the Leader of the Government.

The fact of the matter is that since Monday evening a member of the Conservative Party has been the Acting Chairman of that committee. Senator Kelly has been the Acting Chairman of that committee since Monday evening. Therefore, if the committee is adjourned to the call of the Chair, one has to presume that Senator Kelly has discussions with his leader, although I sometimes wonder why he would do that. One has to assume that the government leader knew that it would have been easy to arrange a committee meeting. Therefore, the failure to have a meeting cannot be any pretext for having the debate we are having here today.

The second thing that intrigued me was the fact that the leader introduced a series of interesting, but, may I add, totally extraneous issues. One of the issues he introduced had to do with what was happening to the Canadian dollar. He tried to make the linkage that the falling of the Canadian dollar was, in some way, related to the failure of this chamber to deal with this bill.

I happen to believe that his argument is totally extraneous, but since he has raised that issue, I cannot resist giving one 60-second quotation from the then opposition member, Michael Wilson, now Minister of Finance Wilson, in *Commons Debates* of June 15, 1982. I simply read two sentences which seem to me to apply very much to the question of the falling dollar.

Mr. Wilson said, and I quote:

There have been many times in the past when the Canadian dollar and the U.S. dollar are strong against other currencies, but why is the Canadian dollar weak and the U.S. dollar strong today?

He then went on to answer his question as follows, and I quote:

The level of the dollar is the verdict of the marketplace; it is the barometer of the success or, as in this case, the failure of government policies.

I use that example to merely illustrate the fact that in the past the current Minister of Finance took the position that the falling of the dollar was a direct result of government policies. It is interesting that that position taken by the Minister of Finance was not mentioned today when the Leader of the Government in the Senate was speaking.

I now turn to the question of—getting back to the initial issue I raised at the beginning of my remarks—why is it that we have been unable to reach a compromise? Why is it that

Senator Roblin, for example, has steadfastly and inflexibly hung on to the position that in no circumstances is any compromise possible? Indeed, he has gone to the extreme in the committee of referring to the matter of principle—which I think has been eloquently spoken to here today by a number of speakers, including Senators MacEachen, Stewart, Sinclair and Hicks—as a “mere technicality” at one committee meeting and a “nicety” at a subsequent meeting.

That issue has been debated in the other place *ad nauseam* on a variety of occasions, as historically pointed out so well by Senator Stewart, so I have great difficulty with a concept which says that an item is a matter of principle when one is in opposition but suddenly becomes a “mere technicality” or a “nicety” when one is in government, and when it happens to become extraordinarily expedient to change the principle.

My fundamental problem with this piece of legislation in the form that it is in now, and in the absence of the estimates, is that this chamber is essentially being asked to abandon all principles related to government expenditure procedures and borrowing authority bills and to sacrifice them on the altar of expediency.

So, faced with that problem, I keep coming back to the same question—and the committee had before it three different ministers, all of whom were asked the same question. We had before us the Deputy Minister of Finance who was asked the same question. Senator Roblin in this chamber was asked the same question. The question was simply this: What is the urgency of Part II? Since the last clause of this bill states:

This Part shall come into force on April 1, 1985.

Why is it that this part of the bill must inevitably and irrevocably be linked to Part I? That is the question we asked at every committee meeting. We have also asked it repeatedly in this chamber, and the only answer we have received was given to us this afternoon by Senator Murray, when he said that the fundamental problem, as he saw it, was that returning any portion of the borrowing authority bill to the other place would open up a debate that would consume time, and that was something the government did not want to do.

● (2140)

We have a very interesting problem. First, the government is saying that it is merely in the interests of the management of the time of government business in the other place that we are being asked, in this chamber, to break a principle we regard as fundamental.

Second, I happen to find Senator Murray's argument incredible in light of the fact that there is no government legislation. One could understand, if the order paper were absolutely chock-full, that he might then have a point. The fact of the matter is that there has been little or nothing introduced in the way of government legislation. Indeed, as you all know, this chamber had to adjourn for a week simply because there was no government business to keep it busy.

Finally, when one looks at the issues raised by many members of the Conservative Party, all of which have been alluded to as threats—I believe that word has been used several times