

While I do not anticipate an extensive Question Period—if that is bothering my honourable friend, the Acting Leader of the Government—I think it would be appropriate for us to have Question Period, which, as far as I can tell, is going to be short. Then we can immediately proceed to deal with the languages resolution, hear Senator Macdonald, and go off to our committee with a light and easy heart.

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, it is my understanding that Senator Graham will also be participating in the Throne Speech debate this afternoon. As all honourable senators know, he enjoys the same reputation for clarity, limpidity and succinctness, so I am sure he will not be that long either. Of course, I am in the hands of the Senate. Perhaps Senator Barrow can tell us if some time later than 2.30 p.m. would be satisfactory.

I take it that we are now dealing with the motion itself to allow that committee to meet while the Senate is sitting this afternoon. I have mentioned a time of 2.30 this afternoon, and it seems to me, if I understand Senator Roblin correctly, that the question simply concerns the time the committee should meet and not whether it should have the power to do so.

Can Senator Barrow have leave to explain whether that would work out in a way that would suit Senators Macdonald, Roblin and Graham and the committee members?

Senator Roblin: I think my honourable friend has two things mixed up here. The question before us is the question of leave.

Senator Frith: Leave to bring it forward.

Senator Roblin: The question is one of leave to bring it forward; that is what I am talking about. Until that matter is settled, we do not discuss the substance of the motion. In order to be co-operative and helpful, however, I would suggest that honourable senators agree informally among themselves that they might assert a certain psychological pressure, shall I say, on Senator Macdonald and Senator Graham by agreeing that the committee will meet at 4 o'clock this afternoon for a couple of hours of good work on Bill C-2.

Hon. A. Irvine Barrow: That is agreeable to me, honourable senators. Although the witnesses are scheduled to appear at 2.30 this afternoon, I will ask them to delay their appearance until 4 o'clock.

Senator Frith: It seems to me, honourable senators, that I can now deal with the motion in due course. I therefore withdraw my request for leave.

Hon. David Walker: Does my friend realize that the government was defeated this morning in the House of Commons on a motion in Committee of the Whole, and is it a fact that the government is seriously considering resigning?

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, I think the two questions would properly be brought up in Question Period.

Senator Walker: But this is so serious—it affects your career.

Senator Frith: As soon as Question Period is called, Senator Austin—

Senator Walker: Senator Austin—God forbid!

Senator Frith: As I was saying, honourable senators, Senator Austin and I will try to deal with the very nice parliamentary point raised by my learned friend.

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CABINET

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS BEFORE ROYAL COMMISSION

Hon. Lowell Murray: Honourable senators, I should like to ask the Deputy Leader of the Government whether the Minister of Transport was speaking for the government when he stated before the Macdonald royal commission that federal projects involving research and development are too often located in what he called Ottawa's "Silicon Valley."

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I will try to find out.

Senator Murray: At the same time, will the deputy leader try to obtain from the Prime Minister a statement clarifying whether, when ministers appear before the Macdonald royal commission, the rule of cabinet solidarity is somehow placed in suspension? Mr. Axworthy is not the first minister to have appeared before that commission. Several others have done so, including, I believe, the Honourable Don Johnston and the Honourable André Ouellet, expressing what may have been government policy or what may have been personal opinions. Will the deputy leader undertake to obtain a statement from the Prime Minister on that matter?

● (1430)

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, as I recall, two of the cabinet ministers stated that they were speaking for themselves, but I do not remember that being said in the case of Mr. Axworthy. Senator Murray first asked me to try to obtain a statement on the subject, but then, in closing, he asked me to undertake to obtain a statement. I will not undertake to provide a statement, but I shall try to obtain clarification of the matter, which, I think, is the essence of the honourable senator's question.

Senator Murray: I trust the deputy leader is not in the same position as his friend, the Prime Minister of Dominica, who admitted not having our Prime Minister's telephone number.

[Translation]

DISARMAMENT

PRIME MINISTER'S INITIATIVES

Hon. Martial Asselin: My question is directed to the Acting Leader of the Government in the Senate or, in his absence, to the Minister, Senator Austin. I would like to have some more specific information on the peace mission of the Prime Minis-