

question again. Perhaps he will get a response that is a bit more definitive. I have offered what help I can and, obviously, it is not enough. We can keep the exchange going back and forth like this for the rest of the afternoon, I suspect, but I certainly cannot add anything further to what I have said up to now. The joint committee was there and now it is not there, or is it there? I do not know.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): May I ask the Acting Leader of the Government if, while we wait for this 24 hours to pass, he would undertake to try to ascertain for us what relationship there is, if any, between the truthful, honourable statement made by the minister and the notice of motion put on the Order Paper in the other place by the President of the Privy Council referring the same questions to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs?

Senator Flynn: That is the same question.

Senator Frith: No, it is not. Let us get that straight. I am always pleased to amuse Senator Flynn and he is always easily amused at his own jokes.

Senator Flynn: I didn't make a joke. You did.

Senator Frith: The question that was asked was not as to whether the deputy leader would, in the meantime, get the information. So, that is the question I am asking.

Senator Doody: Is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition asking me to try to ascertain the relationship between the September 1 statement and the Order Paper reference in the House of Commons?

Senator Frith: Not the Order Paper. Let me repeat the question very slowly so that even Senator Flynn can understand it. The minister stated, as I think the deputy leader realizes because he so acknowledged, that there would be a joint committee. He says that as far as he knows that is government policy. There is a motion on the Order Paper under government notices of motions in the other place, dated September 11, 1985, by the President of the Privy Council "that the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs be empowered to consider and report" and so on, and then it deals with three items relating to the Northland Bank and the Canadian Commercial Bank. All I am asking is this: Since he does not know now, and I understand why that should be the case, will he inform himself in the meantime, so that tomorrow he can tell us what the relationship is between those two? Is there an intention to go ahead with both or does one supersede the other? To repeat, I am simply asking if he will undertake to try to get that information for us in the meantime.

Senator Doody: I shall certainly try to get that information for the honourable senator at the earliest possible opportunity.

Senator Flynn: You are trying to clarify the leader's question.

Senator Frith: At no time did we get an undertaking that he would try to get the information until just now. You are just not listening.

AGRICULTURE

WESTERN CANADA—DROUGHT CONDITIONS—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Hon. H.A. Olson: Honourable senators, if Senator Flynn is finished with his amusement, I should like to ask a serious question about a subject which is of great concern to many people in the region of Canada that I come from. My question refers to what is now turning into a major economic disaster for thousands of farmers who were already in difficulty with problems relating to agricultural production generally and are now more specifically affected because of the drought that has devastated that part of Canada.

I should like to ask the acting leader if he can advise when those people can expect from the federal government a response that is in keeping with the magnitude of the difficulties they are facing. It has been known now for many weeks that this situation was developing, and several weeks have passed since any change in the weather pattern could have altered the course of events leading up to the situation that they now find themselves in.

I could add that a contribution of \$48 million in assistance has been announced by the federal government; this, of course, after they had already subtracted \$92 million from the budget of the Department of Agriculture earlier this year. In any event, whatever has been happening, there always seem to be some further promises that we have to review, study and so on in this situation.

I should like the acting leader to convey to the Minister of Agriculture and, perhaps, several others that the time when we can be satisfied with this kind of postponement of decisions as to what they are going to do to be of assistance to these people is running out.

I would, therefore, ask him if he knows now when further announcements will be made about actions to be taken to relieve this very serious situation.

Hon. C. William Doody (Acting Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I certainly appreciate the importance of the question Senator Olson has asked. I shall refer it to the minister responsible and try to get an answer for him at the earliest opportunity. I do not have the answer with me at the present time.

Senator Olson: I have one supplementary question, because I certainly want to review or examine this situation with the Leader of the Government in the Senate when he returns, which I expect will be tomorrow, because I am sure he also takes a keen interest in this matter.

Can he give some indication of what the policy will be, although the details may not be readily available to him for several days?

Senator Doody: I think it is best that I leave this matter until Senator Roblin returns tomorrow. I am sure he will go into the matter in more detail than I would be prepared to do.

Hon. Hazen Argue: I should like to add my voice to that of Senator Olson, pointing out there is now a serious emergency