

Senator Stollery: Would Senator Murray be so kind as to answer the first part of my question, which is: Does he believe it appropriate that a parliamentary committee sit and take decisions without members of both parties being present?

Senator Flynn: Sure.

Senator Frith: The same thing holds true for the House of Commons.

Senator Perrault: Let the government vote in the House of Commons and ignore the bell then, shall we?

Senator Frith: And let Senator Murray set the precedent.

Some Hon. Senators: Order!

Senator Murray: Senator Murray believes in conducting himself scrupulously within the rules.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Perrault: Let me suggest to Senator Murray—

Senator Flynn: Sit down!

Senator Smith: Sit down!

Senator Perrault: —that he is not within the traditions of Parliament. Typical Conservatives, not willing to let parliamentary democracy operate.

Some Hon. Senators: Order!

Senator Flynn: Sit down!

Senator Perrault: Typically Conservative! Typically Tory! Muzzle Parliament, that is what you are trying to do.

Some Hon. Senators: Order!

Senator Perrault: That is what you are trying to do, using an axe against Parliament and destroying Parliament.

Some Hon. Senators: Order!

● (2040)

The Hon. the Speaker: Order!

Senator Perrault: Senator Murray says that technically he is correct. But his actions in relation to the joint committee fly in the face of the traditions of Parliament and the practices which Parliament has established.

Senator Flynn: Stop making a fool of yourself.

Senator Smith: Honourable senators, I have a point of order, and it is this: If the Leader of the Opposition insists on making himself look foolish, in the interests of good conduct—

Senator Perrault: You said “Leader of the Opposition”!

Senator Smith: —and order in this house, we should prevent him from doing so.

Senator Perrault: You said “Leader of the Opposition”.

Senator Smith: You do not have to prove yourself foolish every day.

Senator Godfrey: Honourable senators, may I say a few words of explanation on the question as to whether or not the opposition needs to be guarded. When our committee met at

[Senator Murray.]

its organization meeting, one of those present was Mr. Nielsen, who proposed a motion that we could not meet without representatives of both parties being present.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Godfrey: I pointed out that our committee had acted in a non-partisan fashion for seven or eight years, that partisan politics had never entered into our deliberations, and that in view of that fact I did not consider that we should have that as one of our requirements. Mr. Nielsen was overruled, and we have been going along quite happily for seven or eight years with only the requirement that a senator and a member of the House of Commons be present for a quorum, and it has worked out fine.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Guay: Honourable senators, if we were to follow Senator Murray's version of how to proceed with the committees, I am sure the House of Commons could take the vote right now and solve the matter.

Senator Flynn: That's none of your business.

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

1982-83 CROP YEAR—INITIAL PAYMENT

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board, of which I have given him advance notice. As he is probably aware, this is the time of year when the minister usually makes his pre-seeding recommendation to the prairie farmers. Until last year he announced his initial price for the coming crop year. As it is important for farmers, particularly those in the area I come from, to know what the initial payments will be before they start seeding, will the minister indicate to the house his plans in regard to this matter?

Hon. Hazen Argue (Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board): Honourable senators, I thank the honourable senator for his question. I will give a little background information. It is true that last year's announcement of the 1981-82 initial prices in July marked a departure from the practice of the last decade. Two years ago I announced the 1980-81 initial prices in March, as usual. Farmers complained that they were too low, but they did reflect world market conditions at that time.

World prices improved by July and I was able to announce an increase in the 1980-81 initial price. Prices continued to climb and I was able to announce a further increase in 1980-81 initial prices and make an adjustment payment.

World prices then dropped. So rather than announce no initial payments for 1981-82 last March that would not neces-