

with Senator Molgat, the erstwhile joint chairman of the committee, that the committee is a creature of this house; the committee is a creature of both houses. Members of the House of Commons constituted the majority of the members of the defunct committee.

It was my understanding that the former committee had completed hearing evidence from witnesses. Do I take it now that there is a possibility that there will be variations in the agenda and that this new committee will be stuck with the progress made by the former, now defunct, committee? Can we expect that a new committee will be formed with a new agenda and a new list of witnesses to be heard?

I would point out to Senator Roblin that I did not gather my information on the Australian system by travelling there with a Senate committee; I gathered it from talking to Australians. I have shared some experiences with members of the upper house in Australia. They say that we have the better system.

If some travelling is to be done, it might be as well to invite some members of the Australian upper house, from the different parties of that house, to visit Canada and appear before our committee.

Senator Roblin: Honourable senators, I had refrained from entering this discussion because I felt that some of those who had spoken had expressed my own views on the matter. I can appreciate that the house leader is in a rather difficult position. I am not entirely sure whether I can help him, but I would like to try.

It appears that there is some considerable doubt in the Senate as to the advisability of proceeding with this motion at the present time, and that doubt is shared by both sides of the chamber. That is understandable because it is our Senate that they want to reform and, regardless of our views on this matter one way or another, I think senators are quite right in thinking that they should certainly have an equal voice, if not even a preponderant voice. Perhaps that is expecting too much, but, certainly, we should be heard. The implication of many of the remarks made today is that we will not be properly heard if we are restricted to the time period in the motion.

However, another chamber has to be considered. I understand, and I hope the Acting Leader of the Government will correct me if I am wrong, that the other place may be considering this very resolution this afternoon, and the considerations which appear important to us will not carry the same weight in the other body.

I should like to suggest, if it would be helpful to the Acting Leader of the Government, that this chamber might be agreeable to let the motion stand on the order paper at the present time in order to give him an opportunity to consult with the leadership of the other house to see whether any arrangement can be made whereby this matter can be solved in a way that will better suit the wishes of many honourable senators.

It is an unusual proposal. It is not covered by any rule that I know of. If we wish to be, we are the masters of our own fate. If it met with unanimous consent, we could let the matter stand and give the leader an opportunity to see if he can adjust

[Senator Riley.]

this matter with his colleagues in the other place in a manner that meets with the wishes of this chamber.

Senator Asselin: With the wishes of his colleagues in caucus.

Senator Roblin: I would not like to interfere with the leader and his caucus. He has always shown himself able to negotiate with them. I would not presume that I could do any better.

I think he might consider my idea and, while it might mean that he will miss the eloquent speeches that Senators Bosa and Hébert will make on the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne this afternoon, and perhaps a little of what I have to contribute, I am sure he can bear that with equanimity if the issue we have before us now could be settled in a more agreeable fashion.

Honourable senators, that is my contribution to the harmony of the Senate. I would ask my honourable friend whether there is anything in what I have said that could help him in his difficult task of reconciling this resolution with the obvious wishes of honourable senators.

Hon. Frederick W. Rowe: Honourable senators, before the acting leader responds to those several questions, I have one point to make and one question to ask.

I was not a member of the now defunct committee, but I did attend several of the sessions. I want to say that I was very impressed with the work of the committee and, in particular, with the leadership shown by our esteemed colleague, Senator Molgat. I think it would be a disaster to lose the benefits of all the work done during the past year or so. The quicker we re-constitute that committee—perhaps not with exactly the same membership—and get down to work, the better.

I agree with my colleagues, Senators McEldan and Riley, that we should not set an arbitrary date, either directly or by implication.

The question I have to ask is not posed in any critical or derogatory sense. I have heard several suggestions, apparently made in good faith, that we should send a delegation to Australia to analyze their elected Senate and compare it with ours. It is my recollection that only a year or two ago a delegation of four or five senators went to Australia to carry out this very same task. My question is: What in Heaven's name did they do there? Australia is not next door. Presumably this delegation will spend two or three weeks there since they will have to travel half way around the world to get there. What did they do when they were there? I have never been told what they did, nor do I know what information they gathered.

● (1510)

Honourable senators, why should the idea be advanced—in all sincerity, apparently—that another committee should be sent out there at this time?

Hon. John M. Godfrey: Honourable senators, what concerns me about the suggestion that the motion not be passed today is this: we have heard from Senator Molgat that it will be impossible to meet the January 31 deadline unless the joint committee meets next week. This may create the impression,