

week and get on with it. However, as there is a workable alternative, which I think does no harm to anyone's interest, I thought I had better place this matter before the Senate to see what kind of response there would be to it.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the preference of the government is clear from the notice of motion that is on the order paper which suggests that the Senate adjourn today until next Tuesday. I must say that, with respect to the Family Allowances bill, as far as we are concerned it is possible, unless there is an unforeseen desire on some senator's part to speak, to give that bill second reading today and to send it to committee.

However, in light of what Senator Leblanc said yesterday, and knowing his strong views on the Excise Tax bill, I think it would be almost irresponsible for the Senate to give that bill second reading today when it was clearly indicated to us yesterday by Senator Leblanc that he was not prepared to deal with the bill either yesterday or today. I think it would be quite impractical for us to decide at this moment that we were in a position to give that bill second reading. Therefore, if the Leader of the Government feels in that circumstance that we must come back next week, then we do not consider it necessary to give leave for the Representation bill to proceed to third reading today. I think that if the Leader of the Government is prepared to adjourn the Senate for the same period as the House of Commons, then some consideration could be given to giving third reading to Bill C-74 today. However, I do not think that it is possible to give second reading to the Excise Tax bill.

• (1430)

Senator Flynn: Senator Leblanc is here. He should be able to speak for himself.

Senator Frith: He did.

Senator Flynn: Today.

Senator Roblin: I wonder if I might be permitted to ask Senator Leblanc, in whose name the adjournment stands, whether he intends to speak to the bill today, and, if not, when he would be speaking to it.

[Translation]

Hon. Fernand-E. Leblanc: Honourable senators, I indicated yesterday that I was not ready to speak immediately. I want to congratulate Senator Simard of New Brunswick who introduced the bill on second reading. I would like to scrutinize all the material he has presented, particularly that on equity.

At first blush it would appear that I do not agree with some of the documents mentioned by Senator Simard, but I must take some time to examine them.

[English]

Senator Roblin: I take it then that my honourable friend does not intend to speak to the bill this afternoon. Would he inform the house when he intends to speak to it?

[Translation]

Senator Flynn: Answer the question, it was directed to you.

[Senator Roblin.]

Senator Leblanc (Saurel): I did hear the question, honourable senators, but the answer is not easy. On the recommendation of my physician I will be out of the country for 15 days.

I will speak on second reading after I get back, on March 4 next. However, I discussed the matter with Senator Frith and he has my authorization to proceed while I am gone, if he wants to.

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, I want to put the matter into perspective. Even though Senator Leblanc will not be ready before March 4, if we do sit next week we will allow other senators to speak on this subject. There is no question of adjourning the debate to March 4.

Senator Flynn: It is not serious!

[English]

Senator Frith: Okay, then we won't. He said that it is not serious.

Senator Roblin: I find this an extraordinary situation. Here we have a government finance bill arising out of the last budget and the quite reasonable request of the government that the Senate deal with this measure before the next budget comes down, which is on February 26. Then, we have the information, given us by the gentleman who is the chairman of the committee that will deal with this bill, and in whose name the adjournment of the debate stands, saying that he is not going to speak to the bill today, that, in fact, he is leaving the country and will not be speaking on it until March 4.

Senator Frith: Keep going.

Senator Roblin: Am I to understand that, in spite of the fact that other senators might be speaking on the matter in the interval which, I am sure will be appropriate, we are to wait until March 4 when Senator Leblanc returns?

Senator Frith: That is the point I tried to make, and that Senator Flynn found so amusing. I said that that is not our intention. If we come back next week or the week after to deal with Bill C-80, we will deal with Bill C-80, and if the debate is completed we will not await the return of Senator Leblanc. The only thing now is that we believe that the bill should go to the National Finance Committee. But we will not go on saying, "Sorry, we are going to keep adjourning it in Senator Leblanc's name." That is precisely what Senator Leblanc said. He said that he discussed it with me, and he did.

Senator Simard: Send it to committee.

Senator Frith: Senator Simard has something to add to help us along.

Senator Simard: Then let's send it to committee.

Senator MacEachen: But not today.

An Hon. Senator: Why not?

Senator Frith: Sure, why not send it right now with no debate! Let me put it this way. It is not our intention to apply the Simard formula, which is to send the bill to committee today without further debate. Let us get that clear. We believe that there should be more debate on the bill. I do not think