

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government), with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(g), moved:

That when the Senate adjourns today, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday next, December 18, 1984, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

He said: With the permission of honourable senators, I should like to say a few words about the schedule for next week. There is quite a large number of bills which were placed on the order paper today for second reading next week. It is our hope that we shall deal with them all by Thursday, December 20, so as to have Royal Assent that afternoon. With the sort of co-operation and goodwill that we have been used to receiving in this chamber, I have no doubt that we shall accomplish that.

There appear to be few, if any, contentious bills among these. I think most of them are hangovers from the previous parliament. If we do succeed in getting Royal Assent, it is hoped that we can rise on December 20 and adjourn until January 21. Is my understanding correct?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): That is our hope.

Senator Doody: Of course, if things do not proceed according to plan and some unexpected hitches arise, or unanticipated legislation reaches us from the other place, or, indeed, if we do not fulfil our work commitment in the Senate, we may have to stay a day or two later and perhaps come back a little earlier. But it is hoped that will not occur.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

ENERGY

CANADA-NEWFOUNDLAND OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS AGREEMENT

Hon. Frederick W. Rowe: Honourable senators, members of the Senate and the great majority of Canadians were pleased to hear the announcement yesterday that an agreement had been reached between the federal government and the Government of Newfoundland respecting the development of offshore oil and related resources. Honourable senators are no doubt aware that this is something that has been discussed for many years, dating back to the period of the Pearson administration. At that time preliminary discussions were held.

The information we have received so far is of a very general nature—so general, indeed, as to be somewhat mystifying to some Newfoundlanders and perhaps also to others.

Therefore, I would request, in all sincerity, that the Leader of the Government enlighten us regarding this matter beyond the bare bones of information that most of us received yester-

[Senator Hastings.]

day from the media, from the appearance on television of the two ministers, and from some of the reports carried by the press this morning. Can the Leader of the Government give us any additional information on this matter?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I thoroughly concur with the expression of satisfaction that I detect in the honourable senator's comments, that progress is being made in connection with the Canada-Newfoundland offshore oil and gas agreement.

I agree with him that the information available so far is not as definitive as he and others might wish. There has been a consensus on the fundamental concepts that go into an agreement between the two levels of government that is substantially the principles already agreed upon and outlined in the Atlantic Accord that was negotiated between the present Prime Minister and the Premier of Newfoundland some time during the summer. So, in terms of the broad outline of the agreement, they can be found in the terms of the Atlantic Accord.

However, a good deal of work still has to be done to reduce that accord to legal form, and I am told that it is not anticipated that it will be completed until perhaps the middle or the end of January. At that time it is hoped that there will be a definitive document that crosses all of the "t's" and dots all of the "i's", which will then be available for public discussion.

Senator Rowe: Honourable senators, as a supplementary, I remain a little mystified. The Leader of the Government has used the word "satisfaction" in respect of my earlier comments. At this point I cannot agree with something about which I know very little; and I am sure that applies to many Newfoundlanders and, indeed, to other Canadians. For example, the Honourable Pat Carney is quoted as saying:

● (1420)

We have reached agreement on all substantive issues.

The only thing that has to be dealt with now are some technical matters, so we expect to be able to return in January to further refine an agreement for early signing.

This does not seem to jibe with the statement just made by the Leader of the Government. As far as I am concerned, there are more than technical matters that have not been enunciated. The workings of the agency are referred to in this article. It will be a seven-member board with a neutral—which is not my word—chairman, and Miss Carney is credited with saying an "independent" chairman. How does that fit in with the seven members of the board? What are they? Are they independent, neutral or what? Does it mean that the chairman does not have the right to vote under any circumstances? Normally, it may not be necessary for the chairman to cast a vote, but there are always occasions when the chairman must exercise this right. Those are some of the things I was hoping the Leader of the Government would flush out for us this afternoon.

Senator Roblin: If I have misinterpreted my honourable friend and he is not satisfied, I certainly withdraw the allegation and take note of his dissatisfaction. I am satisfied to the