

of the Canadian Commercial Bank. I think, therefore, it would be the responsibility of the Leader of the Government to explain what, up to the present, has been impossible to explain. Perhaps he could do it tomorrow.

However, honourable senators, in deferring the questions of substance, I would like to ask the acting leader about a statement made by the Minister of State (Finance) on September 1, when she announced the liquidation of the Canadian Commercial Bank.

In that press release the following sentence appears:

Mrs. McDougall also announced that the government will be asking Parliament to establish a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons to examine matters relevant to the Canadian Commercial Bank and the Northland Bank.

I should like to ask the Acting Leader of the Government in the Senate whether that commitment of the minister will be implemented and when we can expect to have the reference that would permit us to establish the joint committee.

Hon. C. William Doody (Acting Leader of the Government): To the best of my knowledge, these discussions are still taking place between the Leader of the Government in the Senate and his colleagues in the other place. Also, to the best of my knowledge, there is no resolution at this point regarding the composition of that committee. Whether, indeed, it will be a joint committee, as the Leader of the Opposition has suggested, or whether it will be a committee of the House of Commons, I am not in a position to say at this time. I have not received any definite word on that.

Senator Argue: He was quoting the minister.

Senator MacEachen: It was not my suggestion that there should be established a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons; it was a declaration of the Minister of State (Finance) in an official press release with respect to the Canadian Commercial Bank and the Northland Bank. She stated that it was the intention of the government to ask Parliament to establish a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons.

I am somewhat puzzled because there appears on the Order Paper of the House of Commons a reference of that matter to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs. That is a committee of the House of Commons. That reference is to examine the affairs of the Canadian Commercial Bank and the Northland Bank.

I am really asking the acting leader whether he knows about this and whether the commitment made by the minister has been overruled, and if it has, why it has been overruled, and whether the leadership of the Senate has been consulted about this joint committee.

Senator Doody: I can only repeat what I said a few moments ago. I have no more information than has the honourable gentleman opposite. He read very well, and I congratulate him on that. I have read the same press release, and I know as much as the honourable gentleman opposite

knows. If I had had more information on the matter, I certainly would have provided it.

Senator MacEachen: Can the Acting Leader of the Government in the Senate tell us whether the commitment made by the Minister of State (Finance) still stands?

Senator Doody: There must be a communications problem. I will try again. I have no more information than has the honourable gentleman opposite. He has read the same material as I have read. I cannot confirm or deny any change in the minister's decision at this point.

Senator MacEachen: Can the acting leader confirm that the minister was telling the truth when she issued this press release?

Senator Walker: Don't be ridiculous!

Senator Doody: I must say, quite candidly, that I have a great deal of confidence in the minister. I am not in a position to say that I subjected her to a polygraph test to determine whether she was telling the truth in the press release. I can only assume that she was telling the truth, just as she has done in the past. I have no reason to suspect that she did not; I rather suspect that she did.

Senator MacEachen: I thank the acting leader for telling us that this does constitute a truthful statement of government policy and that there will be a joint committee established.

I now ask when we will receive the reference.

Senator Doody: I have just told the honourable gentleman opposite that I am sure the statement, when made, was truthful. What the situation is today, as I say again for the fifth or sixth time, I have no further knowledge of, other than what is in the document.

If the honourable gentleman opposite wants to obtain further information, he will have to put the question to those in the government.

Senator MacEachen: So, the acting leader cannot tell us whether there will be a joint committee of Parliament. He can tell us that the minister made a declaration of government policy on September 1. He does not know whether that is government policy today. He cannot say that it is or is not.

Senator Doody: That is right.

Senator MacEachen: We need someone in this chamber who can tell us what is happening and whether we can place any reliance upon statements made by ministers. Surely, that is part of the problem with the growing erosion of the credibility of this minister—that is, no one, not even the Acting Leader of the Government in the Senate, can rely on what the minister says.

Senator Doody: For the sake of the record, I will repeat what I have said. I have every confidence in the minister. She is a lady of impeccable character and reputation. I have every respect for her.

As for this matter of grave concern to the honourable gentleman, I suggest that he wait for 24 hours and ask the