

Oral Questions

to agree again to sign the accord that was signed originally by the heads of government of the 10 provinces and the Government of Canada.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary questions.

The Charest report was intended to find some ground for a companion resolution, not to undermine the five principles that Quebec put forward but to find a common ground for a companion resolution that could go with Meech Lake to address some of the outstanding concerns in the rest of Canada.

Can the Acting Prime Minister tell us if a companion resolution is still on the table for discussion and exactly what elements would be in a companion resolution?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, not only is the House aware of the process that is under way now. The country is very much aware of that process.

The country knows that what has to be achieved now is the agreement of 11 first ministers to the Meech Lake Accord. That is what is being sought.

The discussions over the weekend were constructive. They did not narrow the area of disagreement sufficiently to allow us to proceed immediately with a First Ministers' Conference, but progress is being made, and progress is being made with respect to an approach that if we are successful will result once again in all 11 governments of Canada signing and approving the Meech Lake Accord.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, the public is aware that there have been meetings behind closed doors with the premiers of the provinces. After these meetings the Prime Minister and the premiers came out and made a short statement. Members of the House and the public have some idea of what the positions are of the premiers of the province, but we do not have a clear idea of the position of the Prime Minister.

I ask the Acting Prime Minister to tell this House and to tell Canadians what is the negotiating position of the Prime Minister as one of the 11 first ministers?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the negotiating position of the Prime Minister is to secure the approval of the Meech

Lake Accord. That was his position when he chaired the meeting that negotiated that accord. He has not changed his position. He will continue to seek agreement to persuade three governments that have departed from the agreement signed in the name of their provinces to affix their own signatures to that accord.

There are other activities that have to occur during the days immediately ahead. Senator Murray, for example, will be visiting Newfoundland for discussions with Premier Wells of that province, and other discussions as might be necessary will occur. As the Prime Minister has indicated, when there is information that would be helpful to the process of negotiation to express to the House, it will certainly be expressed to the House.

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TRADE

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Is it not time that Canadians were told what this government is up to in relation to talks among Canada, the United States, and Mexico on a North American trade agreement?

We have reports about the cabinet considering a paper, reports about the Prime Minister holding discussions with the Mexican President, and reports from Mexican diplomats that invitations will be offered on June 9.

Is this government going to involve this country once again in major trade talks without any mandate at all from this Parliament or from the Canadian people? Is it not time this government came clean and told Canadians what is going on?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, what is going on is that there has been an interest expressed by the Government of Mexico in discussions of some kind of trading arrangement with the Government of the United States. That matter is being discussed between those two governments.

• (1430)

The Prime Minister of Canada has expressed some several weeks ago in this House when the matter was first publicised his admiration of the economic perform-