

Senator Murray: Surely the honourable senator is not complaining about adding two subjects to the list originally put forward in 1982 on which unanimity was required. Surely he is not making as his own the quite unfounded criticisms of the effect of the spending-power clause in the Meech Lake Accord.

In any case, we are not in the ballpark to discuss the concept of a parallel accord as put forward by Premier McKenna. So long as some provinces insist on making further amendments, the honourable senator knows what the effect of that would be. If either of the two provinces that have not yet ratified Meech Lake bring in a resolution that is different from the resolution that has been passed by this Parliament and by eight provinces, then it would be a new resolution. We would all have to begin with a new resolution and set a new three-year time clock in motion with the possibility of further changes in provincial governments or changes of mind in provincial governments. We would be putting ourselves and the country on an endless constitutional treadmill.

Yes, we would like to find a way—perhaps by exploring the concept of the parallel accord put forward by Premier McKenna—to close this chapter in our constitutional history in order to get on with these other important constitutional reforms.

● (1450)

Senator Olson: Have you given any indication to date of what the federal government is willing to do to promote that and what would be contained in a parallel accord, which would also deal with the subject matter of the Meech Lake Accord, so that there can be some hope? A lot of people think that there is an insistence that the package not be touched, otherwise, it will become unravelled.

Some people are willing to give the federal government and other governments credit for keeping their word. If they give an undertaking that they are ready to make some amendments to some of those things that are of concern to them, they might accept that as something that will be done after June 23. We have not had any indication that I know of yet that the federal government has put forward any proposals as to what would be in a parallel accord dealing with the subject matter of the Meech Lake Accord that concerns people now. If you have, I missed it.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, in the list that I enumerated a number of matters have already been considered in the Meech Lake Accord; but, as I say, we are not in a position to discuss in any detail what might go into a parallel accord, because there are still a couple of provinces that want to bring forward further amendments, the effect of which, as I just explained, would be to start the whole process over again, open the three-year time clock and put us on a constitutional treadmill.

Senator Olson: I must say, honourable senators, that is a strange way of negotiating by saying to people that you are willing to consider a parallel accord but you are not willing to discuss what is going to be included in it. Have you said anything about the amendments and, as I said, the devolution

of authority respecting this federal spending power that is included in the accord? If you have, I missed it.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, it is by no means clear, as I explained in my first reply to the Leader of the Opposition, that many or, indeed, any of the proposals put forward by Newfoundland, New Brunswick or Manitoba could achieve the unanimity that would be required.

For example, Manitoba wishes, as the honourable senator suggested, to go back to the 7 and 50 amending formula with regard to Senate reform. The Quebec veto is not the only matter that is involved here. I would remind him that the government of his province, Alberta, took the position, in reply to Manitoba, that it would not accept that recommendation. In the words of the minister, Mr. Horsman, it would make Alberta a second-class province.

[Translation]

Hon. Azellus Denis: I have a supplementary question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Were the federal government to decide to discuss a parallel accord, would it not have to call a meeting of all premiers to discuss everything that would go into such a parallel accord? It might contain things which would suit two or three provinces that we know about, but other provinces might in turn object to these new parallel accords.

In case of a parallel accord, have you provided for a meeting of premiers and on limiting the number of items in such an accord to two or three?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, in principle, the answer is yes. A parallel accord would likely need the unanimous agreement of the governments concerned. At this time, we are far from that stage.

As long as two provinces insist on directly amending the Meech Lake Accord, we are not even able to talk about what might be in a parallel accord.

[English]

PAY EQUITY

PROVISIONS OF TREASURY BOARD STUDY OF FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE—POSITION OF SENATE

Hon. Lorna Marsden: Honourable senators will have seen the recent press reports regarding the pay equity payments from the federal Treasury Board after a five-year study by the federal government on the question of pay equality in the federal public service. The report also indicates, however, that there is no intention of releasing the study, or at least that the study of pay equity has not been released. Can the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell us if that study will be released, and, if so, when, and, if not, why not?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, I shall have to consult with Mr. René de Cotret, the President of Treasury Board, on that matter and I will advise my honourable friend as soon as I have a report from him.