

deal with cutting rights, timber rights and so on. There are also personnel and regulation involvements.

The legislation should be passed by March 31. Otherwise, it will carry over into another fiscal year and will lead to a lot of confusion for industry, the public and so on. So, with a view to trying to move the legislation ahead, I have asked the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to have the committee pre-study the subject matter of the bill, and he has agreed. With the agreement of the Senate, I suggest that the subject matter of this bill be referred to the committee.

● (1410)

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, can the Deputy Leader of the Government tell us, since this is a House of Commons bill and not a Senate bill, whether his information encourages him to believe that we will get the bill before March 31 and, in fact, that we will get it in time to give it some study and debate in the Senate after the committee reports?

Senator Doody: Honourable senators, my information is that we should get the bill fairly soon from the House of Commons. I am not in a position to give a date, but I am told that the urgency of the bill has been conveyed to the various house leaders in the other place, and I understand that they are in the process of coming to an accommodation.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

On Notices of Motions:

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Doody, is there another motion?

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I am going to ask that the other motion be deferred until we have had an opportunity to look at it more closely. It is the same sort of bill, except that it deals with the disposal of certain assets held or used by the Northern Canada Power Commission in the Yukon Territory. I am told that there is a great deal of urgency attached to this bill as well, but I would like to make some inquiries in order to be in a position to answer questions that may be raised about it. I may ask for a pre-study of this bill tomorrow or whenever we get the necessary assurances.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, we should have on the record that the bill the honourable senator is referring to is Bill C-45.

Senator Doody: Yes, it is Bill C-45, the Yukon Power Act.

QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION

NEGOTIATIONS TO INCLUDE QUEBEC—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Le Moyné: Honourable senators, my question is directed to the Leader of the government in the Senate. We know the government has the praiseworthy intention of "bringing Quebec into the Constitution". We hope it also has the desire to do so, which would bring it one step closer to the decisive act.

My question is: Why is the government still involved in so-called preliminary and informal meetings like the one announced for April 30, to which all provincial premiers will be invited?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, it would be a disaster if a new initiative by the federal government and the provinces were to founder. That is why we have made every possible effort to finish the preliminary work completely before starting formal negotiations.

I may add that all provinces and the federal government agree the time is not yet ripe for formal negotiations.

That is why the Prime Minister has invited the ten provincial premiers to Meech Lake on April 30, to take stock of the situation and decide what the next steps will be.

Senator Le Moyné: Honourable senators, I have a supplementary. Could the Leader of the Government in the Senate firm up the specifics of the rather woolly announcement made this morning?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, my honourable friend is asking me to be firm and specific. All I can say is that the Prime Minister issued a press release in which he announced that the provincial and federal first ministers have had four meetings on the trade talks with the United States, that the first ministers will meet at the end of March to discuss constitutional questions affecting aboriginal peoples, and that the time has come for the first ministers to meet and take stock of the situation with respect to Quebec and decide what the subsequent steps will be.

As the minister responsible for Federal-Provincial Relations, I have met with my counterparts across the country, and our officials have met on several occasions. The Prime Minister feels that both ministers and officials have done a good job, that they have done as much as they could for the time being, and it is now up to the first ministers to take stock of the situation.

Senator Le Moyné: If I understand correctly, the minister feels that it is too early, that it is premature to demand specific details of the proposals the government intends to make and the government's intentions.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, we have not tabled any concrete proposals on this matter, for the simple reason that the other parties have not asked us to do so.