

**Hon. Jacques Flynn:** It was rejected, and that is the end of it.

**Senator Fairbairn:** The question of the royal commission is not one that relies on a constitutional amendment or deal. It is a direct commitment between the federal government and the Aboriginal peoples. Under that situation, rather than the constitutional context, would the Leader of the Government in the Senate not feel that there is an obligation on the part of the federal government to proceed with that suggestion, as was outlined in some detail by the Prime Minister in his letter to the Manitoba chiefs?

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, the answer is in the negative. I do not feel the government is under an obligation now to take that step or any of the ones outlined in that letter. However, I am sure there will be discussions with the leadership of the aboriginal organizations in the future, and this and other matters will be considered.

## HIBERNIA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

### PROGRESS OF LEGISLATION

**Hon. Joyce Fairbairn:** Does the Leader of the Government in the Senate take the same view—that obligations should be put off in time—in the case of the bill concerning Hibernia? This bill was thought to be so important that the Parliament of Canada should reach a decision quickly on it. However, I understand it is not proceeding this week in the House of Commons.

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations):** Honourable senators, I do not know what is happening in the House of Commons. I will have to consult one of my counterparts there.

**Senator Olson:** You do not know what he is doing?

**Senator Murray:** I think the bill in question has been reported out of the legislative committee and is awaiting report stage or third reading in the other place. I have no more information than that on the matter.

**Senator Olson:** He does not know what the cabinet is doing!

## FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

### PARTICIPATION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS

**Hon. Charlie Watt:** Honourable senators, I should like to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate a question. The premiers have mentioned the establishment of a bilateral process with the federal government, especially in the area of communications and manpower. This leads me to believe that this is going to happen in the next few days, weeks or months. If that is the case, the Prime Minister of Canada has a responsibility under section 91(24) of the British North America Act. Even though this is not a constitutional issue, but an administrative issue, would the Prime Minister be

[Senator Fairbairn.]

inviting the Aboriginal peoples of Quebec to participate, especially to deal with the communications and manpower issues?

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations):** Honourable senators, participate in what?

**Senator Olson:** Bilateral negotiations.

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, negotiations are going on continually on those matters and a range of other matters. It is not the custom to have parties, other than the governments involved, take part in such negotiations.

**Senator Watt:** Honourable senators, do I understand that there is no chance that the Aboriginal peoples will be invited by the Prime Minister to take part in this bilateral process? Are you saying that this is an on-going issue and therefore the Aboriginal peoples will not be invited to participate in the issues of communications and manpower?

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, I do not know precisely what the honourable senator is referring to. Discussions on matters such as communications and manpower take place between the federal government and provincial governments all the time, without any other parties being involved. But if there are matters that directly engage or affect Aboriginals, as is the case in many land claims and other negotiations, of course, representatives of the Aboriginal peoples are also involved. But I have no reason to believe that in the ongoing discussions on communications and manpower there is a particular reason for having other than the representatives of the governments. This is being done largely at the official level at the moment, with representatives of the different governments present and taking part.

● (1700)

**Senator Watt:** I have a supplementary question. Let us say that that is the case, namely, that they are dealing with an ongoing issue with regard to manpower, immigration, and communications. From what I have been reading, and from what I have seen on the news, the premier of the province would rather deal on a one-to-one basis with the central government rather than allow the other provinces to participate on issues that are related to Quebec.

Could the leader give me some information or enlighten me—if you cannot do it today, perhaps another day—as to whether there is room for Aboriginal people living in Quebec to be directly involved in matters that might not be related to immigration, communications or manpower? In other words, if there were subject matters related to the aboriginal issues, would the Prime Minister then invite the Aboriginal people to participate?

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, the representatives of the Aboriginal people living in Quebec, while they do not take part in routine government-to-government discussions, have every opportunity to make representations, certainly, to us and, I am sure, to the Government of Quebec.

I myself have met delegations representing Aboriginal peoples in Quebec on several occasions to discuss a wide range of