

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, nevertheless the fact is the envoys of the Prime Minister did not address the cry of heart that came from the aboriginal leaders.

It was told to the Prime Minister during the meetings in Ottawa by the premier of Manitoba that there was not sufficient time to allow the democratic process to be heard, and the Prime Minister decided to roll the dice. Will the Prime Minister now undertake his solemn responsibility, as the First Minister of this nation, to meet directly with the aboriginal chiefs of Manitoba and come up with concrete proposals, not promises, but proposals that would meet their concerns?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I bring to my friend's attention something that he may have missed. In a statement on June 18, the Manitoba Métis Federation representing, I believe, 80,000 people, said it wants the debate on the Meech Lake Accord, and the companion resolution, to be allowed to proceed in the Manitoba Legislature.

Yvon Dumont, president of the federation today called on MLA Elijah Harper to end his procedural blockage of the resolution. Here is a very distinguished aboriginal leader who is saying: "Let the people decide. Let the people who are elected get to the legislature and let them take cognizance of the package that has been put forward".

**Mr. Simmons:** Answer the question.

**An hon. member:** You are shifting the blame.

**Mr. Mulroney:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say I am shifting the blame. I am quoting a very distinguished aboriginal leader, and I am not shifting the blame to anyone.

I took the liberty of calling Phil Fontaine directly. I called Mr. Fontaine, notwithstanding the fact that the statement he made on Saturday was negative. The statement was: "We want to kill Meech Lake. No matter what you say or what you do, we want to kill Meech Lake". I called him and asked him, given the great importance of the Meech Lake Accord to Canada and the fact that the Meech Lake Accord is an instrument that is so vital to unblock further instruments that will provide justice for the aboriginal peoples, if he would undertake to meet a delegation from Ottawa led by Senator Murray. Senator Murray went out there and put forward a package pursuant to my conversation with

Chief Fontaine which this morning, for example, in *The Montreal Gazette* is described as follows:

Even in their own terms, the leaders of Canada's native leaders have probably made a serious mistake in not accepting the large olive branch that Prime Minister Mulroney held out to them in exchange for passage of the Meech Lake Accord.

It goes on:

That offers the native people as much as Meech offered Quebec. And just as Meech is the best offer Quebec is likely to put to the rest of Canada for many years, so the native people may find that having spurned this chance, they may not get another, in such a favourable climate, for a long time.

We want and we stand for justice for the aboriginal peoples. That is what I conveyed to Chief Fontaine. That is what I convey to him today on the floor of the House of Commons.

I know that my hon. friend wants that justice for aboriginal peoples. It can only be secured in these circumstances by passage of Meech Lake. I ask my hon. friend from Winnipeg: call your friends in Manitoba. Ask them to ensure the passage of Meech Lake so that the aboriginal peoples of Canada can finally get justice.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I say very simply: I do not understand why the Prime Minister is evading his own responsibility in this case. It does not matter how many editorials he reads, how many other people he quotes, the situation is of his making and, therefore, he must take responsibility.

**Mr. Speaker:** Perhaps the hon. member could put his question.

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Why will he not simply meet face to face with the aboriginal chiefs, put concrete proposals to meet their concerns and break the impasse. The power is in your hands, Prime Minister, why won't you do it?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I do not know whether this line of questioning is going to continue, but I want to advise both sides of the House that I am not going to let liberties be taken on this issue.

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is asking me about why I won't, I suppose, go out and see the chiefs myself. I asked Senator Murray to head a delegation composed of Paul Tellier, the secretary of the cabinet and Clerk of the Privy Council, Norman Spector, the secretary to the cabinet for federal-provincial relations and Stanley Hartt, my chief of staff. All of this, by the way, was