

Oral Questions

Does this mean, in the Government's interpretation, that the January 1 date fixed for the trade deal to come into force could be easily postponed by the Government?

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, we negotiated an agreement with the United States which says that it comes into force on January 1, 1989. This Government is working toward that deadline, as is the Government of the United States. Neither the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, Allan MacEachen, or whoever, will prevent us from reaching that deadline.

REQUEST FOR GENERAL ELECTION

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, at least to me and my Party, this quotation suggests that the Senate announcement by the Leader of the Opposition will mean very little in terms of the timing of the next election. Therefore, the moral issue still faces the Government.

● (1440)

The Government has to make a decision, and I ask the question directly. Will the Government let the people of Canada make a decision with respect to whether this deal should go forward or not? Will the Government let the people of Canada decide?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Hon. Member has read the trade agreement and that he knows that Article 2105 states that the agreement is to come into effect on January 1, 1989. He is also very aware that the legislation is proceeding in committee through the House of Commons.

I want to assure the Hon. Member that that process will continue. I also want to assure him, as the Prime Minister has stated, that there will be an election at an appropriate time. I have no doubt that there will be a number of issues discussed in that election campaign, trade being one of them.

I want the Hon. Member to know that yes, indeed, we will be proceeding with the legislation. Second, there will be an election in due course. I ask the Hon. Member to be sure to put those two things together.

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ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

DENE AND MÉTIS LAND CLAIM

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, I have a question that falls under the category of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I will put the question to the Acting Minister, if one is present, or to the Acting Prime Minister.

My question concerns one of the most important aboriginal land claims in Canada at the moment, one which is in fact teetering in the balance. On July 10 the Dene and Métis of the Northwest Territories said yes to the proposed agreement-in-principle provided that certain matters could be either negotiated or re-negotiated, and a request to this effect has gone to both the Minister and the Prime Minister.

I would like to know if the Government has considered this request, and what exactly is the position of the Government at the moment with respect to the settlement of this vital northern claim.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member would be pleased, as we are, that the Yukon Indian leaders have voted to accept the land claims settlement for that northern territory. As the Hon. Member also knows, the negotiations for the settlement with the Dene and the Inuit have gone ahead. There are a couple of outstanding items still. These are being negotiated. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has himself spent a great deal of time and effort on this particular claim, and those negotiations and discussions are continuing.

CONCLUSION OF NEGOTIATIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. It will come as some surprise to the Dene, the Métis and the Government of the Northwest Territories that those negotiations are in fact continuing. The Deputy Minister for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development said that there would be no negotiation on the outstanding items.

I am asking the Government to say today whether or not the door is still open. Is the Government prepared to pursue every avenue and examine every option in order that there may be a successful conclusion of all aspects of this claim?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the Hon. Member is aware, and as I have said, there have been considerable negotiations that have taken place to date. There are still a couple of major areas outstanding.

I will certainly refer the Hon. Member's question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, but as I understand it there is now a process under way to negotiate or to ratify an AIP. Following that ratification, the negotiations with 13 different groups will be continued, hopefully to the same successful conclusion that has been worked out with the Yukon claim.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT ATTEMPT TO NEGOTIATE
OUTSTANDING ISSUES

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Following on the same line of thought about land claims, I