

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, I can confirm that the meeting between the Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable John Wise, and his provincial counterparts in western Canada will take place on Tuesday next, at which time these elected officials will be following up on previous discussions among them and among their various departmental officials. We will be outlining to the provinces in more detail the approach of the federal government to this serious problem.

SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

APPOINTMENT OF JUSTICE—PROVISION OF MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Hon. M. Lorne Bonnell: Honourable senators, some weeks ago we were honoured and privileged to have appointed to this place a new senator from Newfoundland, the Honourable Gerald Ottenheimer. Senator Ottenheimer, who has lots of experience, is not in his seat today. I suspect that he is in Newfoundland with the Fisheries Committee. His appointment can probably be considered the first to the Senate under the Meech Lake Accord. We now have a new judge on the Supreme Court. Were the provisions of the Meech Lake Accord followed in the appointment of that judge, and was the province asked to present a list of names?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, the provisions of the Meech Lake Accord respecting appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada do not come into effect until the accord has been proclaimed.

Senator Olson: That is a new interpretation!

Senator Bonnell: Honourable senators, it is my understanding that, although the Meech Lake Accord has not been passed by all the provinces and that although it is not in effect as yet, it was agreed by all the premiers who signed—

Senator Barootes: All?

Senator Bonnell: It was agreed by all the premiers who signed the document and by the Prime Minister that they would try to live within the provisions of the Meech Lake Accord until it was proclaimed.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, with regard to appointments to the Senate, there is a political accord providing that appointments be made according to an interim procedure, even before the amendments are proclaimed. Therefore, as my friend has noted, in the case of the vacancy for Newfoundland, the Government of Newfoundland was asked to submit, and did submit, a list of names from among which the Prime Minister selected one; namely, Senator Ottenheimer. No such agreement was made with respect to appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada. However, since it is the most recent appointment—that of Mr. Justice Sopinka—that is of interest to the honourable senator, I would simply observe that the Attorney General of Ontario indicated in a media report today that he was indeed consulted by the federal Minister of

Justice and that he thought that the appointment was, if I recall his exact description, “a first class appointment.”

Senator Bonnell: I have no doubt that the appointment is a first class appointment. The man has great experience; he is well qualified; and he will make an excellent Supreme Court judge. However, that is not my problem. My problem is that I had thought that there was some agreement—perhaps not a written agreement or a contract, but a kind of unwritten agreement—that the Prime Minister and the provincial government involved would submit lists for these appointments.

Senator Murray: The honourable senator's problem is that he has not read the accord. There is, as I say, a political agreement among First Ministers that the procedure for Senate appointments will take place immediately. However, the procedure in respect of Supreme Court appointments will not take place until the amendments are proclaimed. We are living within a spirit of national reconciliation in this country which, I am happy to say, is alive and well.

WESTERN ARCTIC (INUVIALUIT) CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

Hon. Heath Macquarrie moved the third reading of Bill C-102, as amended, to amend the Western Arctic (Inuvialuit) Claims Settlement Act.

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, prior to third reading of this bill, I would remind you that Senator Macquarrie was asked to obtain some information regarding this matter. He has the information with him and I believe it would be worthwhile for us to hear it.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): It should be on the record.

Senator Macquarrie: Honourable senators, I must say that I was torn between the benefit I would convey upon my colleagues by not making a speech as against the commitment I made earlier to inquire of the ministry as to matters raised by some of my colleagues. Today I am in that usual position of using the hand of Esau and the voice of Jacob, and I am sure honourable senators will know when I am being Esauvian and when I am being Jacobian.

I was interested in the remarks made at various stages of the debate on this small but, I think, valuable and important bill. I was pleased to have the privilege of attending the meeting of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology chaired by my distinguished colleague, Senator Tremblay. I was impressed by the remarks and questions of the various senators who took part. I was also favourably impressed by the two witnesses from the department who attended to provide information. In fact—and this is, by the way, not in the text—I have a high regard for the present Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I think he is bringing workmanlike attitudes and sensitive compassion