Oral Questions

a mock battle with the Senate. In the meantime it is Canadians who are being wounded and it will be our highly effective unemployment insurance system that is the casualty.

In British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Alberta the section 26 training option has been suspended, with Ontario and other provinces soon to follow. The Tory back-bench continues to applaud the commitment of the employment minister to job training while she steadfastly refuses to release additional funds for this valuable option.

New Democrats have consistently asked the Government to bring in the variable entrance requirement so workers in economically depressed areas or in seasonal jobs can more readily qualify for benefits. This plea has been ignored.

Again, New Democrats demand the government withdraw Bill C-21, bring in the variable entrance requirement and grant the much-needed additional funds for the Section 26 training options.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose a question to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister's latest attempt to break the Meech Lake impasse in Manitoba has clearly failed. In fact it is clear that the envoy sent to Manitoba did not understand the significance of the statements made by the Manitoba chiefs.

I ask the Prime Minister, given the extraordinary nature of the problem which he must take responsibility for creating, will he undertake to meet personally with the aboriginal leaders in Manitoba in an effort to come to grips with the fundamental issues which are at the heart of this very serious crisis in Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, on June 9, in the final communique of the Meech Lake discussions the undertaking was as follows:

The Premiers of New Brunswick, Manitoba and Newfoundland undertake to submit the Constitution Amendment, 1987 for appropriate legislative or public consideration and to use every possible effort to achieve decision prior to June 23, 1990.

That was 10 days ago, 10 days ago, and the premier of Manitoba had agreed to use every possible effort to achieve a decision prior to June 23.

Inasmuch as the premier has, and all people acknowledge it, a unique minority situation, the comments of the leaders of the opposition that same day were also important. I think my hon. friend would agree.

Mrs. Carstairs, the leader of the Liberal Party, said that day: "We are prepared to meet all days and all nights, long into the nights, early into the mornings, if need be weekends, in order to make it happen and we think it will happen."

Mr. Doer, the Leader of the NDP, said:

We felt it was the best we could do under the circumstances and that we should move on in our constitutional process and get onto the real issues that are facing Manitobans and Canadians and take this proposal to the legislature—

The obligation clearly rests upon the signatories of the agreement to deploy their best efforts to get this passed by the twenty-third because the unity of Canada very much depends on their seeking to honour that undertaking.

With regard to the chiefs, I think it is generally acknowledged that Senator Murray led a very significant delegation to Winnipeg.

We put forward what is described in the press today as a most generous and attractive package in favour of the aboriginal peoples by the Government of Canada. Phil Fontaine, leader of the Assembly of Chiefs, said that the aboriginal people were not swayed from their strategy, and I am quoting him, "—to do everything we can to kill the accord and its companion resolution." I am saying to the premier of Manitoba, to the leaders of those two parties, to Phil Fontaine and all the chiefs with whom we want to work: do infinitely more on behalf of aboriginal justice in Canada; do not take the position that it is time to kill the Meech Lake Accord; work to get the Meech Lake Accord passed because it is the instrument whereby aboriginal justice can come to the peoples of Canada.

● (1420)

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!