

advising them at the same time that Premier Wells of Newfoundland had agreed to interrupt the debate in the Newfoundland legislature at a certain hour on Friday so that a vote could be taken.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, with regard to what Premier Wells told me, I can only repeat what I have said publicly, namely, that he had assured me on many occasions during the week—because I had many conversations with him—that the vote would take place either Thursday night or early Friday morning. He had given that same assurance to others. So I would have felt quite confident in conveying that assurance to the leaders in Manitoba—that is, if, indeed, I did so. I do not recall having done so, but I would have felt quite confident in doing so.

I spoke with two of the political leaders in Manitoba individually at various times during the week. Finally, on Friday night, I spoke to the three of them, gathered in someone's office—

Senator Olson: It was the premier's office.

Senator Murray: —the premier's office in Winnipeg.

The situation in Manitoba should be obvious to my honourable friend, who is experienced and counts himself something of an expert in the rules.

Senator Olson: No; I do not.

Senator Murray: The situation in Manitoba, as acknowledged by the leaders in that province, was that by inadvertence and mischance a procedural problem arose. It was not just for lack of unanimous consent that the situation arose. There were, it appears, faulty or deficient Notices of Motions put on the order paper. The government told me that they had one set of advice from the Table in their legislature and a ruling from the Chair that surprised them. In the course of the week various opportunities were lost to put down Notices of Motions. At least two of the leaders told me that at different times in conversations I had with them.

The members of the Manitoba legislature were, until Wednesday, prevented from debating, much less voting on, the Meech Lake Accord. The leaders took the position that if 3,000 or 4,000 people were registered to be heard by a legislative committee, all of them should be heard. I argued against that proposition publicly and privately. In view of the serious circumstances, the seriousness of the matter, and of the fact that there had been public hearings through a task force that consisted almost entirely of members of the legislature several months before, and in view of the fact that the three party leaders had made strong arguments for voting in favour of the Meech Lake Accord, I felt the same arguments could be made in favour of getting it voted on before June 23. I so argued this in my discussions with Premier Filmon, Mrs. Carstairs and Mr. Doer.

Senator Olson: There is more to it than that, though. As a matter of fact, some of the information conveyed in that conversation was false: namely, that you had an assurance

from Premier Wells that a vote would be taken at eleven o'clock that morning. It is almost incredible that Senator Murray could not have realized that a telephone works rather well from Winnipeg to St. John's. When they checked with him, he said that no such undertaking had been given.

• (1600)

In addition to that, I should like to ask the Leader of the Government to tell us about the other tactics he used. In most circles it is called "economic intimidation." That is what was visited on those leaders of the political parties. They were being forced to do what they did not want to do: set aside their rules to introduce a motion to override the objections of Elijah Harper and to vote on the accord without the benefit of public hearings. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind, after listening to the people to whom I have talked, that these are the kinds of tactics Senator Murray engages in, and that, indeed, he had been engaging in them for some time even prior to Friday.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, the honourable senator is taking very serious chances here in some of the statements he has made. First of all, he has attributed to me the utterance of false statements. Let me tell him again—

Senator Olson: Just answer! Did you tell them or not? Answer the question, or at least try to!

Senator Flynn: Order!

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, if I told Premier Filmon, Mrs. Carstairs and Mr. Doer that I had had assurances from Premier Wells that the vote would be held Thursday night or Friday morning, it was because I had those assurances repeated to me numerous times. I really do not think Premier Wells would deny for a moment having given me those assurances many times in the course of the week, and having given them to others, including the Prime Minister. As late as Thursday he had given the Prime Minister the assurance that the matter would come to a vote on Friday. There is no question about it in my mind, and I do not think Premier Wells would argue with my recitation of the facts, because the assurance was given so frequently.

Let me tell the Senate the circumstances under which I sought and received that assurance. Premier Wells was pressing upon me the importance, indeed the necessity, of having Prime Minister Mulroney accept his invitation to address the Newfoundland House of Assembly. It is no secret that a number of people advised Prime Minister Mulroney against accepting that invitation. Among the people who advised the Prime Minister publicly against accepting the invitation were at least two or three members of Premier Well's government—and they said as much on national television.

Naturally, I raised these matters with Premier Wells when he telephoned me, as he did on several occasions, to discuss the matter of the Prime Minister's appearance in the Newfoundland House of Assembly. In the course of those discussions I referred also to statements that had been attributed to Premier Wells during his meetings in New England on the occasion of the meeting of Atlantic premiers and New England gover-