

I ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate to comment on a quote attributed to the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Mazankowski, found in one of today's newspapers. It states:

If there was something that could be coming, I think, from both Mr. Bourassa and Mr. Peterson, to the extent that there was a real willingness on their part to move on Senate reform, it would seem to me that it would draw more western Canadians and Atlantic Canadians on side.

My question is: Could the leader explain what was in the Deputy Prime Minister's mind that left him with the impression that there is no real willingness on the part of Premier Peterson and Premier Bourassa to "move on Senate reform"?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, my colleague is drawing an inference from Mr. Mazankowski's statement that he did not intend and that is not there. As a matter of fact, both Premier Bourassa and Premier Peterson have indicated considerable interest in Senate reform and in pursuing the issue at the top of the Round 2 agenda. That was the agreement among all the provincial premiers in August of 1986 at Edmonton. That was confirmed at Meech Lake and was most recently referred to again in the communiqué the first ministers issued after their conference last November.

Since that time Premier Peterson's government has taken the initiative by appointing a committee of the Ontario legislature to begin a study on Senate reform so that Ontario will be ready with a position when the First Ministers' Conference on Senate Reform is held in western Canada in November of this year.

Senator Hays: Can the leader report any similar progress with respect to the province of Quebec? Mr. Mazankowski is quoted—and I agree with him entirely—in the same article as follows:

Clearly Senate reform is the dominant issue on the minds of western Canadians.

As an Albertan, I share that with him, and it is a matter which has us in turmoil in Alberta, at least.

I would add from memory a quotation from an article found in a newspaper several months ago, and hopefully the leader can report some progress since then. It was to the effect that the Prime Minister of Quebec "was anxious that there be no elected representatives from Quebec in addition to MPs and MNAs."

When I read that I followed it up and called the Premier of Quebec's office and he did confirm that he did not say that, but his office would say nothing about the Government of Quebec's position. I am wondering if there is anything the leader can report emanating from Quebec along the same lines as Ontario.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, Quebec has not appointed a legislative committee, for example. During his tour of western Canada Mr. Rémillard was very forthright in

[Senator Hays.]

his declarations of support for, and interest in, a reformed Senate.

My honourable friend will understand that Quebec is not prepared to enter into substantive negotiations on Senate reform, or indeed on any other constitutional matter, until the Meech Lake Accord has been proclaimed. That has been Quebec's understanding and that was the agreement the first ministers reached in August 1986.

ETHIOPIA

STARVATION IN NORTHERN PROVINCES—GOVERNMENT AID

Hon. Lorna Marsden: Honourable senators, I am sure we were all glad to see that the Canadian government gave aid last week to those people who are suffering from famine in Tigré province. At the same time it is profoundly depressing to see Canada raising the sovereignty issue instead of helping to open up the possibility of an airlift to the people of Tigré province. This is an old and repellant diplomatic nicety that has led many people to death and suffering in the past.

Will the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell us whether or not the government plans to take the initiative and airlift foodstuff to the starving people of that province? If not, what alternative is the government proposing to relieve their suffering?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, I expect there will be some further statement from my colleague, Mr. Clark, on this matter within the next little while.

CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

POINT ACONI POWER PLANT PROJECT—POSITION OF GOVERNMENT

Hon. Robert Muir: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. However, before posing the question, may I express my thanks and those of many other people on Cape Breton Island for the leader obtaining proper funding in the Estimates to proceed, through the Cape Breton Development Corporation, with the Langan Mine. Whoever does the newspaper clipping for the leader may have passed on an article quoting union representatives, business people and management people in this regard. I also want to thank the leader for the cooperation he gave me and the United Mine Workers' Union respecting certain negotiations. He works behind the scenes, and I presume that is what the leader is doing respecting the Meech Lake Accord.

In any event, my question deals with an issue that was raised in the other place yesterday. The leader is aware that the Nova Scotia government will proceed with a coal-fired electrical power plant at Point Aconi on Cape Breton Island, which will provide employment and great benefits in the future for the people of that area and all of Cape Breton. A member of the socialist party, speaking in the other place yesterday, raised great objections to that plant going ahead. I am referring to