

Oral Questions

Armenian Committee of Canada will receive all members of the House of Commons and the Senate who would like to meet His Holiness.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister, I have a question for whoever is acting as Prime Minister today.

The Prime Minister concluded this morning a series of meetings with all the provincial premiers on the matter of our present constitutional impasse. I would like to ask the acting Prime Minister whether the Prime Minister has found the basis in these discussions for a solution to this constitutional impasse and whether, in particular, as a result of these discussions he will now be calling an early First Ministers' Conference.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister had the opportunity over the weekend and this morning to meet with each of the premiers of Canada in an individual meeting. The discussions were productive and useful.

There still remains more discussion to occur. More needs to be done before we think it would be productive to convene the first ministers here. Those discussions are continuing.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs who is acting as Prime Minister today.

The Prime Minister is certainly aware, I am sure, of the requirement in Manitoba for public hearings in order to make a decision on any solution to the constitutional impasse, and Newfoundland has a requirement with respect to holding a referendum for that purpose.

I would like to ask whether the Prime Minister believes that there is enough time to put into effect any solution that will be reached to the constitutional impasse, bearing in mind the requirements of Manitoba and Newfoundland and the fast approaching date of June 23.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is yes.

Obviously there is not a lot of time. The hon. Leader of the Opposition asked the question whether the Prime Minister believes there is enough time. Assuming that there is the will to agree and assuming that that will to agree exists, we believe that an agreement can be achieved within the timeframe that is known to the House.

I repeat that while the discussions over the weekend were useful, there remains more to discuss and there are conversations that are continuing.

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my third question is still directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. As we know, this morning the Prime Minister concluded a series of meetings with the provincial premiers. I wish the minister would tell us what the Prime Minister specifically intends to do now with the provincial premiers, to seek a solution to the Constitutional impasse by June 23. What is the next step? And why not have a First Ministers Conference, now?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the conversations that took place on the weekend were useful. We must continue the conversations that were initiated with the premiers of certain provinces, and try to find the basis for agreement. The federal government and the Prime Minister intend to pursue these discussions. For the time being, we do not think there is sufficient consensus among the First Ministers, among the eleven governments, to call a First Ministers Conference. However, we hope we will continue to make progress.