

Oral Questions

Mr. Crosbie: You are really desperate, Ed.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the socialists is getting desperate. He should also know that when we assumed office the unemployment rate in the Atlantic region was 17 per cent. Today it is 14.9 per cent and I think that is real progress.

I think the hon. Leader is relying upon the leaked documents he is getting from his colleague, the Member for Yorkton—Melville. All he has to do is be patient and wait for the announcement. Then he will see precisely what will be included in the Atlantic Opportunities Program. Also, if he will be just a little patient, I am sure there will be a statement issued with respect to the DRIE issue. Perhaps then that will answer the questions he has on his mind, superficially or otherwise.

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THE CONSTITUTION

1987 CONSTITUTIONAL ACCORD—APPLICATION OF NON-DEROGATION CLAUSE

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to my hon. friend, the Deputy Prime Minister. The insertion of a so-called non-derogation clause for aboriginal peoples has improved somewhat the Meech Lake Accord. However, aboriginal leaders remain very concerned and very apprehensive because the non-derogation clause applies to only one small part of the Accord. For example, it is not applicable to the spending power provisions.

Why did the Government decide to restrict so narrowly the application of this non-derogation clause? Will the Government consider extending this clause to cover the entire Accord?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, once again I simply want to remind my hon. friend that this was an accord that was struck and agreed to by the eleven First Ministers. There was extensive negotiation and consultation, with much give and take.

The Member puts an interpretation on the particular clause in question. I thought that my colleague, the Minister of Justice, responded to that rather appropriately yesterday.

Let me repeat to all Hon. Members of the House that we intend to pursue this Accord with the fullest possible opportunities for a parliamentary hearing process so that all Members of Parliament and interested parties can come and place their views on the record. As I said yesterday, I will be meeting with my opposition counterparts very soon to lay out the various options of how we might best proceed.

In fairness, rather than debating the details and the interpretations on specific elements, I think that the committee process might be the best opportunity for the Hon. Member to pursue that.

FUTURE CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS ON FISHERIES

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, the Accord calls for continuing constitutional talks on certain matters, including Senate reform, as well as the matter of the fisheries. How is it possible to discuss the matter of fisheries in the absence of aboriginal leaders? The Deputy Prime Minister knows that the fishery is a basic and primary aboriginal and treaty right guaranteed in our Constitution. Will he agree to include aboriginal leaders in all constitutional talks that relate to the important matter of the fishery?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): There is a clear provision for future constitutional talks that is enshrined in the Accord. Clearly, there are matters that can be taken up as seen fit by the parties to that agreement. If the Hon. Member is making that recommendation, I am sure it will be taken into consideration.

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REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

REPORTED AUDIT OF DEPARTMENT'S BOOKS

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Yesterday I was able to inform the House of the incredible revelation that the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion does not have sufficient funds to meet its 1987 and 1988 regional development commitments that have already been made. Of course, this was confirmed in the House by the Minister. It affects jobs in the regions.

I was also informed this morning that, in a highly unusual move, the Government has hired the private consultant firm of Price Waterhouse to audit the books of this Department and straighten out this incredible mess. Since this is such an incredible occurrence—this Government cannot even run its Department in a business-like way—can the Deputy Prime Minister tell the House why this occurred and why it was not identified earlier? How can the Minister make a full and complete statement to this House “very soon” when Price Waterhouse, I understand, just yesterday began its work auditing those books?

● (1140)

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, it is true that there is an internal investigation going on with respect to this matter. I simply said that I believe the Minister will be making a statement, or issuing a letter correcting some of the issues