

requests, I would like Senator Murray to confirm that he will do everything he can to facilitate the process. However, I think the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes* went to little too far when they said in their press release that if it were not for the federation and the community's efforts, and if Francophones had depended on the federal government to help them, linguistic duality would have disappeared from the agenda a long time ago. I think this is an exaggeration, because there are no grounds for making such a statement. The federation went on to complain that the Court Challenges Program was being sabotaged, although the government explained why it had to make this decision.

The federation complained about the way agreements between Ottawa and the communities in Manitoba and Alberta were treated. I believe those programs have been very useful and will likely continue to serve these communities very well. We should get back to this later on.

I would urge the federation to be a little more careful with its criticism in future.

However, I would also appreciate an answer from Senator Murray.

**Hon. Philippe Gigantes:** Could we find out what the question is, honourable senator?

**Senator Simard:** I know that Senator Gigantes is occasionally distracted—it happens to everybody. The records of the Senate will show that my question was asked twice. I repeat it again.

Will Senator Murray encourage Prime Minister Mulroney to meet with the spokespersons of the Federation to discuss the many issues that concern them, including the Court Challenges Program, agreements between Ottawa and the Francophone communities and also whether they of Federation can play a role on the constitutional committees that are to begin this week or next week at the latest?

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, regarding the association's criticisms of the present government, we must remember that the federal government and the provinces wanted to entrench recognition of linguistic duality as a fundamental characteristic of the federation in the Meech Lake Accord. Unfortunately, the Meech Lake Accord did not pass.

● (1440)

We discussed that question extensively in this House. I will tell my friend, Senator Thériault, that the federal government did everything it could to improve their recognition; for example, we tried to use the word "promote", but to recognize the linguistic duality as a fundamental characteristic of the federation would have been unprecedented. It would have meant a step forward for the linguistic minorities of our country. I can only refer to the words of the former Commissioner of Official Languages, Mr. D'Iberville-Fortier on that subject, whether my friend Senator Thériault likes it or not.

That being said, we must also remember that, in 1988, this government had the Canadian Parliament approve a new Official Languages Act whose regulations are beginning to be

applied in the area of the language of service. Later, some rules on the working language and on equal representation within the Civil Service will be implemented. Those are two of the fundamental principles of the new legislation.

I will be pleased to submit to the Prime Minister's Office a request for a meeting on behalf of the Association des communautés francophones.

**Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question.

From the answer given by the Leader of the Government in the Senate in reply to Senator Simard, can we conclude that he will give us his support in the deferred vote which will be taken later on?

**Senator Murray:** No, honourable senators. I am happy with the assurances given on that issue by my colleague, Mr. Corbeil, Minister of Transport.

## THE CONSTITUTION

### ENSHRINEMENT OF BILL 88

**Hon. Jean-Maurice Simard:** Honourable senators, I have a second question. I thank Senator Murray for his support in relation with the previous question.

My second question concerns an old issue of many years, concerning a request made a few months ago by the New Brunswick government (according to the papers of that province) asking the federal government to enshrine in the Constitution some of the principles expressed in Bill 88, an act recognizing the equality of the two linguistic communities in New Brunswick.

You will recall, honourable colleagues, that I raised that question on several occasions. I am doing so once more today.

Even if I remain optimistic, we must remember that when Meech died, the project to enshrine this provincial bill was delayed. I had warned my colleagues of this House and the people of New Brunswick that the strategy adopted by the New Brunswick government, lead by Mr. McKenna, was bad, that it was out of place and that the Canadian Constitution, allows for the enshrinement of Bill 88 through a bilateral agreement, whether there were constitutional talks or not.

But Mr. McKenna decided to act differently and to tie the request for enshrinement to the Meech Lake Accord. He got it all wrong and he seems ready to make the same mistake again.

I ask Senator Murray whether to his knowledge the federal government still has a request to entrench Bill 88 in the Constitution? We all know how difficult these new negotiations are, of course! I for one think that those difficulties might delay this entrenchment which over 80 Canadian organizations have been demanding for four years.

Senator Murray, I await your reply.

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I believe that this is still the subject of discussions at the official level between New Brunswick and the federal government.