

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.
Motion agreed to.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

THE ESTIMATES, 1990-91—PRIVY COUNCIL VOTE 20 REFERRED TO JOINT COMMITTEE

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(e), I move:

That the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages be authorized to examine the expenditures set out in Privy Council Vote 20 of the Estimates for the fiscal year ending 31st March, 1991; and

That a Message be sent to the House of Commons to acquaint that House accordingly.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.
Motion agreed to.

THE ESTIMATES, 1989-90

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C) REFERRED TO NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(e), I move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine and report upon the expenditures set out in the Supplementary Estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending 31st March, 1990 (Sessional Paper No. 342-526).

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.
Motion agreed to.

QUESTION PERIOD

THE CONSTITUTION

MEECH LAKE ACCORD—RESCISSION BY GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND—POSITION OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, may I ask the Leader of the Government whether he can make any comments today about the plans of the government with respect to Meech Lake in light of recent developments? Premier Wells has given notice that he may

[Senator Doody.]

rescind the Newfoundland adherence to the Meech Lake Accord, following which Premier Peterson has suggested that Meech Lake is not dead but requires some oxygen, and he calls upon the Government of Canada to provide that oxygen. I wonder what the Government of Canada has in mind at this stage, whether it is to stand pat waiting for developments or to take some lead itself.

● (1450)

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, I think it is fair to note that while the Newfoundland government, in the Speech from the Throne, gave notice of its intention to rescind the Meech Lake Resolution that had been passed by a previous House of Assembly in that province, Premier Wells has put no date on that action and has not indicated when he would bring this measure forward or expect to have it voted on.

I think it is fair to say that Premier Wells agrees with the statement we have made to the effect that his commitment in November last was not to rescind so long as discussions were ongoing. He himself is engaged in contacts with other governments, and, therefore, I would not expect that he would be moving quickly or immediately to rescind the Meech Lake Resolution.

So far as Premier Peterson's statement is concerned, yes, Meech Lake is not dead and, yes, it does need oxygen. What is the federal government doing? We are party to many of the discussions that are taking place among governments and we are kept informed on other discussions that are taking place. Beyond that I do not think it would be helpful for me to go for the moment.

MEECH LAKE ACCORD—NEED FOR FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE—REPORTED STATEMENT OF FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS MINISTER—REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I wonder whether the Leader of the Government would clarify for us the recommendation which he is reported in the press to have made to the Prime Minister, namely, that it would not be useful to have a first ministers' conference on Meech Lake. Is it the case that that is the view of the minister, and, if so, what is the reasoning for that particular position?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, it is the prerogative of the Prime Minister, of course, to convene a first ministers' conference whenever he wishes. At a similar stage in the process which led to the Meech Lake Accord I was in a position to advise him that the conditions seemed to me to lend themselves to the holding of a successful first ministers' conference.

Having toured the country and met all of the premiers, and having engaged in other discussions with ministers and officials, I am not in a position to advise him that the calling of a