

ba, because it was a time problem. It was not a rejection of the Meech Lake Accord. The three Manitoba leaders indicated that they were going to support the Meech Lake Accord. One of them told me that there were perhaps 40 out of 57 votes in the legislature ready to be cast in favour of the accord.

I told Premier Wells that our lawyers had told me that we may well have a solution, that it does involve a "yes" vote by his legislature and a reference to the Supreme Court of Canada. I did not attempt to describe in detail what it was, and he did not ask about it. He understands these matters quite well.

Senator Austin: At no time, then, did Premier Wells tell you that it was impossible to get an affirmative vote in the Newfoundland legislature.

• (1630)

Senator Murray: He told me that there was only a small chance of its passing the Newfoundland legislature, and that his motive in not having a vote was that it would be seen as a formalized rejection of Quebec. I told him that if that was his concern, he should have a vote and vote in favour of the accord.

Senator Austin: But, Mr. Minister, if you wanted the Meech Lake Accord to pass, why would you not want Newfoundland to have the benefit of the additional time that would be offered by the constitutional proposition—

Senator Guay: Right!

Senator Austin: —that you were considering at that moment?

Senator Murray: He was not asking for time.

Senator Austin: But he did not even know about the method you were considering.

Senator Murray: I told him that there was a timing problem in Manitoba. I asked him if he had a timing problem and he said he did not. Everyone who wanted to speak in the legislature spoke. I asked him if he had a procedural problem and he said no. Then I told him that, in my opinion, he should vote the accord.

Senator Austin: We are at the nub of this issue, and I would like to help you explain what happened—

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

Senator Austin: —because the proposition is being put that you wanted Newfoundland to vote Meech Lake down. I cannot believe that that is true. I believe that you would have wanted no negative result in Newfoundland; therefore, I am puzzled as to why you would not want Newfoundland to have the additional time, which your legal theory would have given them, to await an opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada on the rolling constitutional approval process.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Rather than saying you would not even use it unless they first agreed to Meech.

[Senator Murray.]

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, asking Quebec to revoke the Meech Lake constitutional accord was predicated on getting a positive vote in favour of the Meech Lake Accord from all legislatures, albeit one, a bit over the deadline.

Senator Frith: But you would not have had to have it revoked if your theory was correct. If your theory was correct, a new clock would have started ticking without Quebec.

Senator Murray: When?

Senator Frith: As soon as the last adoption was made. That is the only argument you could have. Quebec could have done it later.

Senator Murray: The second resolution was passed by Saskatchewan on September 23, 1987.

Senator Frith: So you could just keep using your rolling theory. Even after that, each adoption would start a new clock.

Senator Murray: Yes.

Senator Frith: It is just not logical to connect it to Newfoundland's adoption.

Hon. H.A. Olson: Did Premier Bourassa agree to pass it again?

FAILURE OF MEECH LAKE ACCORD—POSITIONS OF LEADERS OF MANITOBA AND PREMIER OF NEWFOUNDLAND

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat: My question to the government leader is a follow-up of questions asked by Senators Frith and Austin and of his response to Senator Frith earlier, in which he was discussing why it was that Premier Wells was in a different position from that of Manitoba.

Twice in response to Senator Austin you have said that the three leaders in Manitoba had agreed to support the accord, as if that meant that Manitoba would support the accord. Was my honourable friend not aware that Mrs. Carstairs had specifically stated that there would be a free vote insofar as her members were concerned; that before making any statements the members would listen to what the people of Manitoba had to say; and that there was no guarantee that it would pass the Manitoba legislature?

Senator Guay: Right on.

Senator Molgat: None whatever. If my honourable friend does not know enough about politics to understand the situation in Manitoba, then he certainly was given the wrong impression, that Manitoba was going to pass this. There was no guarantee. So there was no difference between the position of Premier Wells and the situation in Manitoba, was there?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, the honourable senator says there was no guarantee, and, strictly speaking, that is correct. I spoke with two of the leaders and others in the legislature. They had done their head counts. True, it was a free vote; true, the Liberal caucus was divided on the matter; true, the New Democratic Party was divided on the matter. But at the end of the day the statements