

Oral Questions

● (1440)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Speaker: I also wish to draw to the attention of Hon. Members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Mike Harcourt, MLA, Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in British Columbia.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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THE CONSTITUTION

MEECH LAKE ACCORD—SIGNING BY FIRST MINISTERS

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. It also concerns the Meech Lake process.

The Deputy Prime Minister has made it clear that the House will not be seeing a constitutionalized version of the Meech Lake Agreement before it receives the signature of First Ministers, perhaps tomorrow. I wish to ask the Minister about the signature process.

If the document is signed by First Ministers tomorrow, or at any time in the near future, will that be a commitment by First Ministers to assure that the resolution is passed in the form settled by the Legislatures which they control? Or will that document come back to this place, and other places, for the hearings and debate that the Deputy Prime Minister has indicated will take place in the spirit that the resolution can be changed and can be improved upon if that is the will of the people of Canada expressed to any hearings or through this place?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, this is a matter that will be dealt with by all the Legislatures. The Hon. Member prefaced his question with the word "if". We are not sure whether there will be an agreement signed tomorrow. Until such time as that takes place it is very difficult to speculate just what process may have to take place. But, as I said, I have expressed a clear willingness to sit down with House Leaders to work out a reasonable approach so that all the aspects referred to can, hopefully, be satisfied.

EFFECT OF PRIME MINISTER'S SIGNATURE

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, does the Deputy Prime Minister view the signature of the Prime Minister on such a document as a commitment to have the support of Parliament? Or does he view that as an opportunity to bring the document back here for discussion, for debate and for public participation?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the Hon. Member. That is for Parliament to decide. He has been a parliamentarian around here for a long time, with a distinguished career. Why does he not act his age?

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ST. PIERRE AND MIQUELON BOUNDARY DISPUTE

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In the midst of all the pomp and circumstance of President Mitterrand's visit last week the Government assured Canadians that it was making progress on the St. Pierre and Miquelon boundary dispute. Now, President Mitterrand's statement and demand that Canada reopen its ports before negotiations continue have indicated that no progress at all is being made. We are right back at square one.

I wish to ask the Minister this. Why have all our diplomatic efforts to reach a boundary dispute settlement with France and St. Pierre and Miquelon failed? Why has progress not been made?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps the Hon. Member misunderstood the position that was stated by President Mitterrand. President Mitterrand, not surprisingly, has indicated that before any agreement is concluded there would have to be, in his view, a reopening of the ports. The negotiations will continue.

I hope that among the changes that might occur as a result of the President's visit here is that members of the New Democratic Party will put aside their rather unique proposal that we should attack France. They have, of course, a unique position in Canadian defence policy in which they want us, as I had a chance to comment before, to get out of NATO, to get out of NORAD, and to declare war on France.

CANADA-FRANCE RELATIONS—PROTECTION OF FISH STOCKS

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, since the Government was so forceful, as it says, in stating to France how important this issue is to Canada-France relations, and since it was so unsuccessful in taking even the smallest step last week toward the negotiation of this boundary dispute, what steps will the Government now take to protect Canadian fish stocks and to protect the livelihood of fishing families in Atlantic Canada?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we are continuing the negotiations. We have made very clear to the President of France and to the delegation travelling with him the importance of the Canadian interests involved. If the Hon. Member is suggesting on behalf