

**of Communications):** Honourable senators, my friend's question is based on a faulty hypothesis, namely, that discussions might be held to reopen the Meech Lake Accord. There is no intention of doing so.

The one point of the premise to his question with which I agree is that there will be meetings of First Ministers in the future. The Prime Minister so indicated in a letter he sent to the premiers in October, after the election was called, necessitating the cancellation of the meeting that had been scheduled for November. There will be a private luncheon or a private meeting of First Ministers after the turn of the new year, as was done following the 1984 election.

I believe we can probably look forward, if there is agreement, to a more formal public meeting of First Ministers later on. At that meeting, as at previous formal public sessions, the territorial governments would of course be represented and the leaders of those governments would be invited to speak.

**Senator Lucier:** Honourable senators, of course this is a hypothesis; it has to be. That is how Meech Lake came about. No one knew that it was happening until the day it took place, and then it was too late to speak about it.

● (1410)

The people of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories were not represented when the meetings took place. The whole of Meech Lake was done without the participation of either of the territories. I am asking for the minister's assurance that, if discussions take place again concerning Meech Lake, we shall be at the table and shall be represented by our elected representatives, as the other people of Canada are.

I have a quotation here from a statement made by the Premier of Alberta last week. He said:

Meech Lake is an agreement between first ministers. If there are any problems with Meech Lake, I think we should get together as first ministers and make sure we bring the premiers who are having trouble on side.

You do not have to know a lot more than that about the mentality of the premiers to know why I am asking this question. The people of the north want to be represented if the north is being discussed at any constitutional meetings.

I would like the assurance of the minister that the government will at least ask the premiers if they will have our elected representatives there. If they will not do that and the premiers object, we would like to know which premiers object.

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, the question remains hypothetical.

**Senator Lucier:** The answer remains very blank.

MEECH LAKE ACCORD—FIRST MINISTERS' MEETING—STATUS OF REPRESENTATIONS OF PREMIER OF MANITOBA—REQUEST FOR COPY OF GOVERNMENT'S REPLY

**Hon. Jack Austin:** Honourable senators, at the last sitting I asked the government leader whether Meech Lake would be on the agenda of a First Ministers' meeting. He said that he would be astonished if it were not.

[Senator Murray.]

With respect to that meeting, has the government leader just told us that the representations of Premier Filmon with respect to changes in the Meech Lake Accord will be rejected?

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government, Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations and Acting Minister of Communications):** The honourable senator had asked whether Meech Lake would be discussed. I hope I did not misunderstand his question, and I hope he did not misunderstand my answer. Of course, the status of the agreement that has been reached by the First Ministers is almost certain to come up at the meeting. However, that is not to say that the First Ministers would be addressing themselves to changes in the accord. That would astonish me.

**Senator Austin:** But, as I just said to the minister, Premier Filmon has said that he has changes to suggest in the Meech Lake Accord. Is the minister suggesting that those will be rejected or have already been rejected?

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, I am unaware of any changes being advocated by Premier Filmon.

**Senator Austin:** So the minister is saying that no representations have been made by the Premier of Manitoba with respect to the Meech Lake Accord that suggest any changes in the accord.

**Senator Murray:** That is correct, honourable senators.

**Hon. Gildas L. Molgat:** Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question. Has the Prime Minister, the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations or the government received a letter from Premier Filmon requesting a meeting on constitutional matters?

**Senator Murray:** Yes, honourable senators. I believe that letter was made public by the Government of Manitoba. Further to that, the premier called me just before he announced that his government was withdrawing the resolution from the order paper of their legislature.

**Senator Molgat:** So the government has received the request, then, from Premier Filmon. Has the government responded that they would agree to such a meeting?

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, the response of the government was that the Prime Minister had already written to the premiers in October suggesting that an informal meeting would be held early in the second mandate of the government. That meeting will be held as soon as a mutually convenient date can be set.

**Senator Molgat:** So we are to understand that the government has not responded to the recent letter from the Premier of Manitoba. In other words, there has been no answer.

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, I cannot say for certain whether a letter has been sent to Premier Filmon, but I am virtually certain that his government and his officials have been reminded of the previous letter that the Prime Minister sent to the premiers in October. That constitutes our response to his call for a meeting.