

Oral Questions

Given the concerns of aboriginal people and the little attention that has been paid to them by successive governments, would the Deputy Prime Minister immediately commit to re-establish the programs that cut back the aboriginal programs in order to demonstrate some good faith to aboriginal people in the country?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for the aboriginal constitutional process, I would draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that in the Meech Lake Accord, in the companion resolution, and in the proposals that the federal government has put forward just this week with respect to aboriginal leaders in Manitoba, the Government of Canada has taken the lead in trying to ensure that the underlying causes of difficulties faced by aboriginal people in Canada are addressed in a serious way through addressing the question of aboriginal self-government.

It is important for the hon. member to recognize that the failure of the Meech Lake Accord would deal a very serious blow to the aboriginal constitutional agenda. She should be supporting the ratification of the Meech Lake Accord and the companion resolution as the most significant key to the serious and long-term permanent resolution of aboriginal issues in the country.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister once again.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister explain to Canadians and to aboriginal people how cutting 100 per cent of core funding for aboriginal political organizations helps them participate in the constitutional process.

How does cutting 100 per cent of funding for aboriginal newspapers help them participate in the constitutional process? Will the Deputy Prime Minister commit to show good faith to aboriginal people to restore funding for aboriginal political organizations and for aboriginal communications?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, in the budgetary process all Canadians have been asked to participate and share in the challenge of reducing the deficit.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

• (1430)

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): Don't do damage to your jaws over there, or your knees.

With respect to the aboriginal constitutional process, I have already made a commitment to aboriginal groups in this country to fund them in the process leading up to aboriginal constitutional negotiations. They have had that commitment from the Government of Canada already.

At a meeting last Thursday evening and at a previous one on May 28, that commitment was reconfirmed by myself and the minister responsible for federal-provincial relations.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, clearly the government does not want to show good faith to aboriginal people by restoring funding.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. McLaughlin: I remind the government that 100 per cent of the core funding was cut for the Assembly of First Nations and 29 other Indian organizations, including the First Nations Confederacy of Manitoba.

My question for the Deputy Prime Minister is this. We know that there are only five days left until the June 23 deadline. In Manitoba, the legislation has not yet been introduced in the legislature, and there are 2,000 people on the waiting list who wish to appear at the public hearings.

The Prime Minister made it clear last Monday that he had a master plan. It was his master plan that created the events of the First Ministers' Conference.

Now that the master plan is unravelling and the Prime Minister is having to admit that he has to deal with those people who were treated unfairly in this process, can the Deputy Prime Minister tell us what this government's plan is for the Constitution?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I hope that the hon. member will have an opportunity to read the letter that the Prime Minister sent to Chief Fontaine, because I think it clearly outlines two things. First, there is our commitment and determination to deal with the problems of the aboriginal peoples.