

Oral Questions

approved by Chief Fontaine and by his lawyer in Winnipeg.

They went out and put forward the proposal that has been described in today's media as probably the most generous ever put forward by a Government of Canada. Inasmuch as my hon. friend is asking me to do more, before he says that, perhaps he should understand what has already been rejected.

What was put forward was that my government is ready to act expeditiously in relation to and provide financial resources for each of the following, as soon as the Meech Lake Accord is ratified:

1. a Federal-Aboriginal process to set the agenda for the First Ministers' Conference on Aboriginal matters; and the acceleration of holding the first Conference;
2. a commitment by the Government of Canada to full constitutional recognition of the aboriginal peoples as a fundamental characteristic of Canada;
3. a participation of representatives of the aboriginal peoples of Canada at any future First Ministers' Conference held to discuss the "recognitions clause";
4. an invitation to participate in all First Ministers' Conferences where matters being discussed directly affect the aboriginal peoples;
5. the joint definition of treaty rights, something that the aboriginal peoples have been seeking for a long time, and;
6. the establishment of an historic royal commission on native affairs of the dimensions and the power of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism that could bring about historic and sweeping changes that would benefit the aboriginal peoples well into the next century.

That is the offer that is on the table. Having seen the offer, Phil Fontaine, the leader of the aboriginal people, says: "We want to do everything that we can to kill the accord and the companion resolution." By taking that attitude, Chief Fontaine is killing off a tremendous opportunity for the aboriginal peoples to move very swiftly and effectively along the road to justice for the aboriginal peoples, which is what this government and all members of the House want.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

A number of observers on the constitutional scene think it will be extremely difficult to find a way to resolve the constitutional deadlock by June 23.

What alternatives, what options is the government considering at this point?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, a formal document was signed by the Premier of Manitoba and the other Premiers, and by virtue of this document, the Premier of Manitoba, seconded by the two opposition leaders, is committed to making—and I will quote the English text—;

—to use every possible effort to achieve decision prior to June 23, 1990.

Ten days later, because of dilatory action by one MPP, they have not even had a chance to hear witnesses, let alone discuss it and vote on it!

When people say they are going to make their best effort, this implies leadership. It implies acting responsibly and exercising leadership. My friend from Winnipeg, who knows what the situation is, should be interested in this statement by the Manitoba Métis Federation, where we find the following:

• (1430)

[*English*]

"Any action in the name of aboriginal people affects the Métis equally", said Mr. Dumont. "We have considered the latest undertaking by the Prime Minister and believe that it is now in our interests, more than at any other time in the past, that we take advantage of the provisions now before us and which are possible following the approval of the accord."

My message to the premier, to Mrs. Carstairs, and Mr. Doer is: "Follow the wishes of the Métis people in Manitoba, pass Meech Lake, and move on to justice for the aboriginal people".

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister.

Notwithstanding what the Prime Minister has already said, I do not think it takes a rocket scientist to figure out that the Manitoba legislature cannot deal with the Meech Lake Accord before the Saturday deadline. There are legislative procedures to be followed, and some 3,000 Manitobans have indicated they want to speak at public hearings.