

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

There is one point on which there is a consensus in this House: it would be better to renew Canada than to have a referendum on sovereignty.

Yesterday, referring to his constitutional policy, the Prime Minister said outside the House that he had a very good idea of what he wanted to do and of the timeframe in which he wanted to do it.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to reveal to the House today what that timeframe is, since every hour wasted is an hour lost for Canada?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we appointed the Spicer Commission and the Special Joint Committee, the Beaudoin-Edwards committee, with very specific objectives. I said that at a given time we intended to put all this together with what transpired from the work being done by the Government of Ontario, the Government of Quebec, the Governments of Alberta and New Brunswick and so on, in a parliamentary process. This would give Canadian parliamentarians a chance to put forward national—not provincial—proposals that would reflect the needs of Western Canada, the Atlantic regions and the North, which might pave the way for a new Constitution or an amended Constitution. That is what we hope to do as we continue our work.

For the same reason, I urged the hon. member sometime ago to submit her own ideas on the subject—which would be a very interesting exercise—on behalf of her political party, and that is why all of us who believe in Canada are going to work together. We may work together as a team to initiate a process that will pave the way for a new but nevertheless strong and united Canada.

*[English]*

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, in fact on this side of the House we want to play an all-party role. We want the Parliament of Canada to begin the real work of examining where we can go as a country.

Since last year, we have asked the Prime Minister for a larger role for the Parliament of Canada. His House leader has acknowledged that over the next few weeks it is likely the government will announce such a committee, possibly in the throne speech.

Given that time is short, given that the constitutional clock is ticking, does the Prime Minister not think it would be better today to share his time frame and his ideas so that the Parliament of Canada can get on with the real job of saving the country?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I do not doubt the sincerity of my hon. friend in regard to her commitment and desire to save the country.

• (1420)

One would have to be pretty far off base to fail to understand that this country, Canada, has been a magnificent illustration of co-operation between French and English speaking Canadians for 123 years. We are resolved to keep it together for another 123 years.

My hon. friend seeks a larger role for Parliament. There were two questions when we came back: one was a larger role for ordinary Canadians. The argument was that there has been too much involvement by many parliamentarians and premiers.

The Spicer commission was designed to invite comments from ordinary Canadians. It has been criticized by some, but I still believe that the Spicer commission will prove to have been an excellent initiative that will provide beneficial results and a major contribution to the debate. It is to report on July 1.

The second problem of substance we encountered not only with regard to the constitutional discussions last year, but with regard to the aboriginal discussions mandated under the previous Constitution was a flaw in the amending process. That is now being dealt with for the first time by a Senate-House of Commons committee.

It is doing very impressive work across the country. I saw some of their hearings from the territories and from Edmonton. Those two reports will have a very major and beneficial effect on the debate. It will be helpful to all parliamentarians.

Now that the Belanger-Campeau commission has reported, now that the Ontario legislature report has been tabled—I discussed it last night with Premier Rae—and other reports are in the process of coming in, the Parliament of Canada can be seized not only of these but of all initiatives coming from all parties and all citizens.