

Oral Questions

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. [English]

Can the Prime Minister confirm for us that the Beaudoin-Dobbie report is now the basis of the discussions that his government is having with the provinces?

Obviously, the Canadian government must know now, at practically the eleventh hour, I would say, where it is going and must show conviction in order to convince the premiers on a constitutional proposal. The surprising thing today—and that is why the Leader of the Opposition asked those questions—is that some ministers in the Conservative government still seem to be uncertain about a proposal that would be acceptable to Quebecers. Obviously, the Government of Canada must know now at least where it is going. If some provincial premiers do not know what must be done, at least the Government of Canada must know where it is going and try to convince these premiers.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my friend is raising quite a different issue.

The proposal in question must come from an agreement between the Canadian government and the provinces. If it were only the Canadian government's position, we would know right away what position to put forward. But the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs must deal with the reality imposed on us by the 1982 Constitution, that is, the provinces and now the native leaders as well. That is not easy. It is one of the results. The 1981-82 strait-jacket is there. We must deal with this reality and that is what the minister is doing.

• (1430)

I can tell my hon. friend this. If at some point we cannot obtain the desired agreement, if, for example, it were impossible to convince the premiers of the validity of a parliamentary report or the urgency to act, we will know what to do. I will not hesitate to come before the House to announce all that to my hon. friend.

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, certainly those of us on this side of the House, the New Democratic Party, will agree that the Constitution and the unity of the country is a very key issue.

I would like to suggest to the Prime Minister there is also an ingredient of unity which is very important and that is the faith that Canadians have in themselves and whether we have faith in this country.

As I travel around the country, I see Canadians saying that they feel insecure. The high unemployment, the results of the high interest rates, the results of the high dollar are creating that insecurity in the Canadian people and this is a factor in unity.

I want to say to the Prime Minister that what Canadians see is this country either being sold off or given away piece by piece. Last week it was oil and gas resources opened up to foreign investment. Then it was the proposed Mexican trade deal. We are perhaps looking at selling off our water resources. Today we see a possible sale of Canadian Airlines to American Airlines.

I know the Prime Minister is concerned about the unity of this country. I want to ask him when is he going to come forward with policies and show he has faith in the Canadian people, in the Canadian economy and work in the interests of Canadian labour, Canadian business and Canadian consumers?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, little wonder that ordinary Canadians are confused and perplexed when the leader of the NDP persists in making abusive statements like the one that she just made.

Every question is prefaced with these kinds of criticisms, some real, most imagined, not a single solid word of confidence in Canada in the process, in everybody from all political parties who are working so hard to keep Canada together. My hon. friend should recognize that there are great difficulties that we are confronted with. It is not easy.