

*Oral Questions*

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Prime Minister has learned nothing about the lessons from the death of Meech.

[*Translation*]

I wish the Prime Minister would explain what Senator Lowell Murray meant when he said that the government was working on a new plan for Canada. We are worried that once again, the Prime Minister may be working behind closed doors and setting us up for a new constitutional disaster.

Will the Prime Minister inform the House today what the exact terms of reference are of this committee? Will he identify the people on the committee? And finally, will he provide for public consultation on the Constitution? Public, not private and not secret.

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons told us yesterday that the opposition parties have 9 full days, at their discretion, for debate on a subject they may select.

In the circumstances it would be quite normal, indeed appropriate and quite useful, if the Liberal party, with its present apparent concern for constitutional matters, were to initiate a debate on the Canadian Constitution and, perhaps for the first time, make known their perspective and positions regarding the reform or renewal of Canada. I think that would be a very constructive approach.

As far as the government is concerned, we have started a series of consultations across the country, through the Special Joint Beaudoin-Edwards Committee and the Spicer Commission. Committees at the provincial level are doing their job in this respect and, of course, a number of officials have been asked to consider these issues on behalf of the Canadian government. I think all this is quite normal. We have a responsibility, considering developments in other provinces, and I am thinking first of all of Quebec, to prepare a dossier and a series of dossiers that, in due time, will help parliamentarians make considered decisions to promote Canadian unity.

• (1420)

[*English*]

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP falsely stated on national television last night that Parliament had voted on December 13 on a motion to expand the mandate of a parliamentary committee studying the amending formula. She also falsely stated that the Liberal Party had voted against it.

I am sure that the hon. leader of the NDP or her party at three o'clock will take the opportunity to correct the record. Unfortunately, no such vote ever took place either on December 13 or at any other time.

Therefore, my question to the Prime Minister is this. Given his reference in the previous question to the work of the Beaudoin-Edwards committee, will he put a motion before the House of Commons today to expand the mandate of the Beaudoin-Edwards committee beyond the mere study of the amending formula? Will he put that motion today and show some leadership so that Parliament can have a public process, not a Prime Minister's process behind closed doors?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. friend knows, indeed as the country knows, I have a great deal of time for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, but any lover's quarrels she has with the NDP should be resolved privately, not here on the floor of the House of Commons.

My friend says that the Beaudoin-Edwards committee is involved in mere study of the amending process. Nothing could be more important. It is inaccurate to suggest that this should be cast aside as mere study of the amending process.

My friend refers to the difficulties we had at Meech Lake; indeed we did. I was grateful then for her support and the support of her leader at the time, Mr. Turner, and grateful for the support of the NDP as well. On two occasions we managed to get the signatures of 10 provincial premiers on side to endorse the concepts contained in the Meech Lake Accord in 1987 and in 1990.

**Ms. Copps:** Will you expand the committee?

**Mr. Mulroney:** Subsequent to achieving those signatures, we had unanimity for the first time in constitutional history in Canada. We achieved unanimity, but we