

Supply

work together to produce a more prosperous united federation.

The question naturally arises: How will the government then develop its proposal? This is where the so-called committee of deputies comes in. For this task, the government is marshalling the best resources available, and in this context the deputy ministers have been given priority assignments whose results will be integrated with the other work that is under way. There is no secret committee and there is no secret agenda.

This has been stated over and over again. It is very important that we use the resources in this country, including our public servants, to help us with the task. Any government that did not would be wholly irresponsible. Of course, we want to use that advice.

The Prime Minister has asked Gordon Smith, Secretary to the Cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations, to co-ordinate this activity. This policy advice which deputies will provide will in no way undercut or pre-empt any other review process. I can assure the hon. member and all members of this House that there will be ample opportunity for public discussion and debate once the federal proposals come forward.

• (1240)

That should lay to rest any concern that something secret is going to happen and going to be sprung on the country. This is a preparation for openness, for renewing this country. Let us keep things on that plane, a non-partisan plane.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I think this proposal could be very beneficial for the people of Canada. For Quebecers, it is not the same ball game, as indicated by the very wording of the motion, where paragraph 7 clearly states:

(7) that discussions begin with only one precondition, a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation;

That would exclude, from the start, participants in the Bélanger-Campeau inquiry, including the three central labour bodies, a movement the NDP is usually closely associated with. These people do not meet the conditions set in the motion. I think it is a good thing for Canada to take some time to define itself. Quebec is doing the same. In Quebec, we have a commission and discussions have been going on for several years. I think it is healthy that these two nations define their identity

on their own so they can establish better links afterwards.

In that context, I would like to ask the minister if, as a member of the government of a country that recognizes the United Nations Charter, one of the main principles of the Charter being the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination—if the minister were so kind as to listen to me instead of looking to one of his colleagues for an answer—So, will the minister tell me whether he recognizes or not the right of Quebec to self-determination following a referendum? Since they are signatories of the United Nations Charter, I would imagine that this principle does not apply only to other countries such as the Baltic States, but first in our own house. Otherwise, it is pure hypocrisy. I would like to hear his comments on this.

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that a referendum was held in Canada some 11 years ago. It was a referendum, was it not?

Mr. Plamondon: Yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Hockin: It is a question of fact. It is not for us to declare ourselves with regard to any declaration of the United Nations. The facts speak for themselves.

I thank the member for his comment about the importance of us defining ourselves in all parts of Canada. This is what this process is helping us to do: to define all parts of Canada. He has his definition of what he would like to see happen in this part of North America. I know that. However, he commends us, who do not agree with him, to go through the process of rethinking where we are going and how we want to see this country renewed.

That is what all of these processes which have been put in place by the government are meant to do.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, the minister will not have to answer because my comments will take about a minute. I trust you will give him a little extra time.

The Spicer Commission is discrediting itself. People such as myself who referred people to the Spicer Commission are finding that it is becoming a source of embarrassment: the expenses, of course the statement by Mr. Spicer on being appointed or words to this effect that "my job", I think he said, "is to prepare English