

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): They are changing their minds because the people of Alberta at this moment are telling the provincial government that they do not want to see medicare destroyed.

We are working to make sure there is less duplication and a better sharing of responsibilities between the provincial governments and the federal government. We are working on that.

• (1430)

However, if the goal is to destroy the central government in Ottawa so that we will have a community of communities, this Prime Minister is not for that.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister speaks of destroying the country and dismantling federalism. I remind him he is the one who allowed the country to get within .6 of 1 per cent—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Calgary Southwest.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about mistakes. The worst mistake the federalists can make in preparing for the next and final contest with the separatists would be to use yesterday's tactics. Yesterday's tactics are for yesterday's federalists, not the new federalists of the 21st century.

That means it would be a profound mistake to go back to the contents and tactics of the Meech Lake or Charlottetown accords, with their talk of special status, distinct societies or vetoes for Quebec.

Will the Prime Minister assure the House and all Canadians that he will not be marching backwards into the future, that he will not go back to Meech or Charlottetown for solutions to the current struggle between federalists and separatists?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here again we see the leader of the third party in bed with the separatist party in the House of Commons.

When we were fighting in Quebec the leader of the third party was in the House shooting at us, contrary to what the leader of the Conservative Party was doing; in the campaign, working for Canada. The leader of the Reform Party was always on his feet trying to ensure he might some day become the prime minister of the rest of the country, because he will never be the prime minister of the whole country, Canada.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the Prime Minister will not listen to me. Maybe he will listen to someone from Quebec.

One of the most telling letters I received during the referendum was from a soft sovereignist who said he would probably vote yes, but who added this explanation: "The matter at hand is not really the separation of Canada and Quebec, but the separation of Quebec from the present form of federal government. You as a Reformer said you want decentralization, which necessitates serious change to the present form of federal government, but negotiations in good faith with the Liberals will not accomplish this".

This Quebecer does not want to separate from Canada but from an overcentralized federal government. He is one of the 80 per cent of Quebecers who want a realignment of federal-provincial powers.

Some hon. members: Order.

The Speaker: I know the hon. member for Calgary Southwest will now put his question.

• (1435)

Mr. Manning: What is the Prime Minister's response to this demand for change from a Quebecer who really wants to stay in Canada?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the person is a soft sovereignist. Perhaps the leader of the third party, who hopes some day to be the leader of the opposition, although he might not succeed if he does not become better than he is, should stop quoting from separatists or quasi-separatists and start to really work with us to make sure Canada is a good country with values and a social system that binds all Canadians together.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. After hinting that he would not respect the democratic results of the referendum, the Prime Minister said he wanted to prevent another referendum from being held in Quebec and then went on to criticize the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which, according to him, did not show sufficient support for national unity during the last referendum campaign.

Does this mean that the Prime Minister not only wants to prevent Quebecers from voting again on their future at the appropriate time but also wants to control the news coverage they get through the CBC?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly not. I made certain comments. I said that some people complained about the way the CBC behaved during the referendum campaign. Someone also said that the CBC was jeopardizing its reputation and should be lumped in with all the other lackeys and puppets of the government.