

*Oral Questions*

concerns and some of the suggestions regarding Meech Lake?

• (1130)

The Deputy Prime Minister knows, of course, that in this House there is very strong support for the five conditions of Quebec. He knows about some other concerns and some other suggestions.

Has the Prime Minister been in touch with the First Ministers? If he has not been in touch, why has that not happened, or will he soon be in contact with them with a view to having a First Ministers' conference, if necessary, to resolve the impasse?

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge he has been in touch with all of them. I know he has been in touch with a lot of them and my understanding is that he has been in touch with all of them. I know that the senator has been in touch with all of them. I know that other cabinet ministers have been involved as have officials been involved in this process.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we are attempting to look for an accommodation. If it is timely and appropriate and if there is a drawing together of the parties and the divergent points of view, I am sure that the Prime Minister would convene a First Ministers' conference.

However, as I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition, I am not sure that the timing is appropriate right now. I think there has to be some further work done and I can assure the hon. member that that is going on.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. The Prime Minister knows perfectly well that the main factor that is contributing to the concern in this country about the Meech Lake impasse is the government's silence.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House when the Prime Minister will report to the House on what his government has done to get out of this impasse?

[*English*]

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate that the hon. member would make that observation because I think many hon. members and, indeed, the country know that the opposite is true. We have not only been not silent, we have been consistent, and the Prime Minister has laid out in very clear and concise terms—

**Mr. Speller:** Where have you been speaking?

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks me where I have been speaking. I would not expect him to have the energy to follow me around the country.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Mazankowski:** I want to assure the hon. member, as I assured the member for Yorkton—Melville and the Leader of the Opposition, that the work is ongoing and will continue. As far as the Government of Canada is concerned, while there are some difficulties at the present time, that does not for a moment lead us to believe that this issue cannot be resolved.

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## GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

**Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister and it concerns the revelation that the government is indeed recruiting RCMP officers to enforce the proposed goods and services tax.

I have in my hand a copy of a memo that was sent to the RCMP on December 13, 1989, recruiting individuals to assist, and I quote: "in the development and implementation of an intelligence unit aimed at gathering information and maintaining an intelligence data base on tax".

How can this government possibly explain this deceitful and unsettling development? Are small business people now going to have to watch their alleyways for undercover agents in trench coats and dark glasses?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, this government has made it very clear that it believes in the fundamental honesty of Canadians to deal with their tax matters in a very honest way. We do