

Oral Questions

he made last week in Quebec, where he defended Canada so vigorously. We also appreciate what was done by the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs on the weekend in Alberta, where he was not afraid to stand up for his country, despite threats that he might lose his riding.

My question, however, is this: When will the Prime Minister instil the same courage in ministers who have been in his cabinet for seven years? The responsibilities of a minister in the Canadian government include defending Canada in Quebec and making Quebecers understand that the future of the French fact in North America depends on a Canadian solution.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his comments. It must be disappointing for those who are trying to destroy Canada to realize that despite the attacks, insults and fabrications, it is clear from the polls that if you ask Quebecers whether they want a separate and independent Quebec or a renewed Canada, every time they will opt for Canada and a renewed Canada. I think this is a very important point.

As for Mr. Parizeau's option, which offers independence— but wait, I want to keep the Canadian dollar, I want to keep my Canadian citizenship, I want to continue to enjoy the benefits of a Canadian economic union, I want to keep the Queen and the flag— it just goes to show that even Mr. Parizeau, deep down, wants to remain a Canadian.

As far as we are concerned, I have no hesitation at all in sending a federalist message throughout Quebec and across Canada, and I am supported in my efforts by the members of my team and by others on the other side as well, and more recently by the Minister of State for Agriculture who made two extraordinary speeches in the Quebec City area, in favour of Canada, and there were many other ministers. They cannot all make the speeches on the same day, but I can assure you they all share my enthusiasm for Canada.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the Prime Minister, in case he did not know, that yesterday on television, the Minister of National Defence said once again that he did not want to defend the Beaudoin-Dobbie report, which was produced by this House and which, according to the Prime Minister, is the best offer Quebec has had in 127

years. Furthermore, his Quebec lieutenant, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, said he would not go and defend Canada unless he had something better than a pocket knife, even if according to what the Prime Minister said just a moment ago, the Canadian option is still the best option open to Quebecers.

When will the Prime Minister finally ask these two ministers, who took an oath to defend the interests of Canada, to do their job or else go home?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is not being quite fair to the ministers and certainly not to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Yesterday, the newspaper *Le Soleil* reported that "Benoît Bouchard said quite frankly that Quebec's separation would have certain consequences and entail certain costs for Quebecers. When someone says there will be a price to pay, when federalists say that, it's blackmail; but if someone says it will be all moonlight and roses, everybody looks incredulous".

I believe that in their own way, the ministers from Quebec and the Quebec caucus are truly and deeply committed to Canada. There are ministers, and there are quite a few, who would prefer to be able to defend a specific plan. That is why we have been trying for some time, on behalf of the government and the Parliament of Canada, to put together a constitutional program we would all be proud to defend in Quebec around referendum time.

I will tell you what I told Jean-François Bertrand. When Mr. Bertrand told me that sovereignty was a clear option, I answered: Sure, provided you can keep your Canadian citizenship, the Canadian dollar, Canadian currency and the benefits of the Canadian economic union. He said: All right, but what do you have to offer? I told him: Mr. Bertrand, you already have it. Canada already exists. It already is something quite extraordinary. Canada is one of the great civilized countries, one of the modern, dynamic and prosperous countries on this planet. As for me, first and foremost, I am proud to be a Canadian, I am proud to live like a Canadian and a Quebecer, and until the day I die, I intend to be able to say to the world: I am proud to be a Canadian and I am proud to be a Quebecer. Both go together.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.