

resolution of this matter with the provincial premiers, as he is called upon to do pursuant to the application of the constitutional provisions of 1982.

I indicated yesterday that is our position. We hope and expect that these efforts will succeed. I think the best way in a federation to achieve success would be in full co-operation with the provincial governments.

I indicated that should we not be able to do so then I would want to examine with the leaders of the House other alternatives in this regard. That is of course what we would propose to do.

If the very challenging efforts of the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs should prove to be unsuccessful over the next five or six weeks, then at an appropriate time we would come to the House with some suggestions as to how we might be able to convey to the people of Canada the options that are there.

One thing is absolutely certain. Should we encounter a wall that would paralyze the activity, and with the clock ticking elsewhere, we will not sit idly by and allow damage to be done to Canada without allowing Canadians themselves to make determinations about their well-being, the future of this great country, and how they want to keep it together.

Mr. Lapierre: Call an election.

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend says in the background, in the Bloc Quebecois: "Call an election". By the time we call an election, but that is not for now. Now they do not want a referendum because they know they are going to lose a referendum because if you ask Quebecers whether they prefer independence or a united Canada, they will say a united Canada 10 times out of 10, and the Bloc knows it.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday the Prime Minister hinted that the process in place to resolve the constitutional debate, the negotiations among the federal, provincial and territorial governments, could fail.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister why the government now thinks that failure is possible. Is there some evidence that the Prime Minister can share with

this House? Will the Prime Minister tell Canadians what worries him and makes him perhaps less optimistic?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker, We hope and expect that the minister's efforts will be successful in this regard. But we are realistic and we realize that problems can arise when you are dealing with some ten governments.

• (1430)

We are just saying that although we hope to succeed, should we not be able to, we would come before the House to consult with the leaders of the political parties that believe in Canada on valid ways to consult the people of Canada.

[*English*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister said earlier today that a referendum is one of the options. I think it is clear to all of us in this House that Canadians want to see leaders coming together if at all possible.

Would the Prime Minister be prepared to go to the people with a referendum without the support of the premiers and perhaps without the support of this House? What would that offer look like and who would formulate the offer that would go to the Canadian people?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the offer would look as silly as the question of my hon. friend.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I thought it was a fairly logical question for the Prime Minister. It simply asked who would formulate the offer and what kind of consultation there would be with the Canadian people in a referendum.

I would like to ask a further question about the proposed referendum. The Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs has often said that a referendum may be used at some time to confirm a national consensus. The Prime Minister is saying that he would not be dealing with the premiers because that process has failed, but that he would force a constitutional resolution through a referendum.

Whether it is before a referendum, during a referendum or after a referendum, under the Constitution of Canada the premiers must be involved. Is the Prime Minister trying to force a consensus on the premiers or is