

*Government Orders*

among people who are accountable in the most final way, in a general election?

Second, she referred to some United States precedents with the relationship between election spending and the successful candidates. That really has no relevancy to a referendum campaign. It does apply when there are candidates in the field.

• (1140)

Colleagues of the member made the point they thought the 1988 election had been bought by special interests. I would ask her whether she has seen any scholarly study or otherwise that would prove the relationship between expenditures made in the 1988 Canadian election campaign and the outcome of that election.

Finally, the member referred to the idea the Prime Minister had rejected the involvement of the provinces and territories from forming the question. Does she not believe they are intimately involved through the present process in determining what the package will be and thereby, by deduction, will be heavily involved in answering the question? I know she posed a question to the Prime Minister a couple of weeks ago on the subject, but I think the question was an all-embracing one involving various groups other than the provinces and territories. I think the Prime Minister's response was if we consulted everybody, we would not have a question.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, a constituent assembly was proposed almost two years ago now at the beginning of the constitutional process. Obviously it is not a process that would be valuable at this time. That is why we support a referendum, but a fair referendum.

In terms of the constituent assembly, as it was originally proposed, I would say the constitutional conferences the government finally did support were microcosms of what that constituent assembly could have looked like. But it was rejected at the beginning. It was rejected as being too different and new. We had to go a traditional way.

A lot of countries have used constituent assemblies and there are many models. There are many ways this country could have gone at the beginning, but we are not at the beginning of the constitutional process now. I

think most Canadians hope we are definitely at the end of the constitutional process.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** I would certainly agree we need to be debating much more in this House the questions of the economy and of our communities across this country that desperately need help; the services in this country that need help; and the unemployed who need the attention of this government and a change in economic policies.

Much work has been done in California and here in Canada in terms of studies about the use of money in referendums. I have not read any studies done on the spending of money during the free trade debate in 1988, which is what the member was referring to I assume. I think there is no doubt all of those people who spent millions of dollars just before the 1988 election to support the Canada-U.S. trade deal, to convince the Canadian people and put fear into their hearts, did not do it because they thought that money would not do any good. They did it because they knew it would influence Canadians and in fact spending that money does influence Canadians. I do not need a scholarly study. Those people did not spend millions of dollars because they thought it would be useless. They spent it because they thought they could put fear into the Canadian people. Now Canadians, including those who supported the Canada-U.S. trade deal, know what it meant is you will lose your job.

Finally, I specifically asked the Prime Minister whether he would involve the provinces, territories and aboriginal people. Those are the three parties, as well as the federal government, at the constitutional table. The Prime Minister clearly said no, it was the purview of the federal government.

My point in asking that question was simply to point out once again to let us try and build in some success here. Let us stop fighting the next election. Let us work for the country and let us do that together. That will be a non-partisan process.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of Labour):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to participate in the debate on third reading of Bill C-81.