

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni):** Mr. Speaker, I am told that the matter was not raised with Bob Rae last night, but—

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

**Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni):** When Parliament returned last September the Prime Minister promised us one of his four pillars, that Canada would address the relationship between aboriginal peoples and governments. Yet his government has fobbed off responsibility for the off-reserve child welfare in the province of Manitoba, refuses to assert jurisdiction for on-reserve policing in Quebec and the Prime Minister himself has ducked every single question on aboriginal issues in this House over the last two weeks, including the last question.

Is this the kind of priority aboriginal people can expect from the Prime Minister and his government?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the government is giving the very serious problems of aboriginals the highest priority and indeed the minister of Indian affairs registered another very significant accomplishment on behalf of aboriginals in British Columbia just the other day, and I want to congratulate him.

I suppose a question of equal importance is: How does the hon. member know what I said to Bob Rae? I think he has been spending too much time with Simon de Jong.

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

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**THE CONSTITUTION**

**Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister who says he has a good idea of his agenda for Canada. All Canadians are proud that our linguistic duality is one of the fundamental characteristics of Canada. I ask the Prime Minister, is it equally an important part of the Canadian agenda that our aboriginal people, our multicultural reality and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms be affirmed as fundamental to Canada's future?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the three final proponents referred to by my hon. friend, I believe, are already in the Constitution and/or in the charter. Obviously that is already there.

With regard to the linguistic duality notion as being a fundamental characteristic of Canada, which it is, that very important precept was found for the first time in the Meech Lake Accord, which is one of the genuine regrets that I had, and I know many had, when it was rejected.

**Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the other three were not found in the Meech Lake Accord where linguistic duality was located.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister knows Canadians feel left out of the constitutional process. They want to participate. They want to be consulted in an open process. Can the Prime Minister give us the assurance that residents in the North, members of cultural communities and members of native communities will be directly involved in the next round this time?

**Mr. Lapierre:** And women and children!

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend said "this time". I personally chaired two sessions with native leaders to obtain a constitutional amendment, and we were very close to success. If there had not been some last minute decisions in 1985 or 1986, we would have obtained this constitutional amendment that was so important to Canada's native peoples. So, do I believe it is important that the issue of economic and constitutional justice for native people is dealt with in a positive way? I believe it is not only important but vital. If we agree that this problem must be settled, we require the participation of all native peoples. And we intend to be very active and in urging them to participate.

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**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. This week, the Commissioner of Official Languages reported that official bilingualism has been very successful, especially in federal institutions and the National Capital, but that improvements were necessary to preserve national unity. Does the Prime Minister agree with the commissioner? And if so, is he prepared to table the regulations for language of work and equitable participation arising from the Official Languages Act, regulations that are now two years late?