

*Oral Questions*

it very simply. On Monday, we had put to the House or to the government a two-line motion. That is a fact.

**An hon. member:** In Question Period.

**Mr. Gauthier:** No, after Question Period.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister has said many times that the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord should not be linked to other provincial legislation. He repeated that many times in Canada, whether in connection with Bill 178 in Quebec or Bill 8 in Ontario, or in other places. He knows very well that the Meech Lake Accord does not mention promoting linguistic duality. Furthermore, the Prime Minister himself in this House refused the amendment proposed by this party. I ask the Prime Minister why he changed his mind. How is it that he now links the Meech Lake Accord to a resolution which is merely intended to support the country's official languages?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the hon. member's attitude. The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier is a great defender of minority rights. I think the same is true of me as head of my party and Prime Minister of Canada. I simply say to the hon. member that last Monday, I received no prior notice as is normally the case when unanimous support of the leaders in the House is sought. I was given the text after hearing the Leader of the Opposition, after oral question period. I looked at it with my colleagues and we submitted it for consideration by the Liberal Party. The hon. member himself said on *Newsworld* the same evening and I quote:

[*English*]

“But I think, generally speaking, that we can support the Conservative amendment if they will change that one word as “expressed” to as “reflected”.

[*Translation*]

The word was changed the next morning. We are submitting a document that allows for a completely normal debate and I have great difficulty understanding why the hon. member is hung up on procedural issues while we want to see it through in support of minority rights and linguistic duality in Canada.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier):** Mr. Speaker, I do not have to take any lessons in regard to official languages. I think I have stated my position in this House often enough for everyone to know where I stand on this issue.

The Prime Minister is quoted in the press on March 17, 1989, where it states: “Don't let Quebec language law destroy Meech Lake deal, Mulroney.” The Prime Minister stated: “There is no connection between Meech Lake and the Quebec law.”

I ask the Prime Minister, how can he this day mix up Canadians—the grass roots of Canada are asking for an expression of support on the linguistic duality of this country—by coming in with another constitutional amendment that has nothing to do with official languages in this country? How can he explain that to Canadians?

• (1500)

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at my hon. friend. He indicated on television that he agreed with the document that he is now denouncing. Either he agreed with it or he did not. He clearly agreed on television with the document that he is now denouncing.

**Mr. Gauthier:** You amended my motion.

**Mr. Mulroney:** Yes, we amended your motion as we normally do and as we are entitled to do. We amended it not to diminish it at all, but to talk—

**Mr. Gauthier:** You neutralized it.

**Mr. Mulroney:** Mr. Speaker, we want to discuss official bilingualism, we want to discuss duality and we also want to discuss the Official Languages Act which has done more, according to the Commissioner of Official Languages, for the promotion of minorities than anything else. Surely this motion is very much in the national interest. If the member does not wish to proceed with his motion as amended, we will table our own motion and we will invite debate in this House which I believe will be fully consistent with every single one of the principles that my hon. friend has very appropriately defended over his long and distinguished career. He will be proud of the motion because he fought for every element in that motion.