

Oral Questions

the House why he is intent on rushing his particular constitutional proposal through the House of Commons at a time when it appears that waiting a little longer would result in agreement on an amending formula and a constitutional package that would have the effect of uniting Canadians rather than dividing them? Why is he rushing through with his proposed Constitution?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I am really happy to hear that the premiers are making some progress. I wish we could say as much for the debate in this House. When the hon. member opposite suggests that we are rushing things—

Mr. Beatty: Except for your speech.

Mr. Trudeau: —I have to remind him we have been on one single amendment for more than five weeks now. I have heard from the opposition party that they would like to see the charter improved in the area of rights of women, in the area of aboriginal rights, and so on.

An hon. Member: Property.

Mr. Trudeau: Property. I am amazed that the opposition call it rushing when they have prevented us from even considering amendments which would improve the status of women and so on. The Leader of the Opposition asks if a little more delay would be useful. Madam Speaker, the measure is still before the House. If the premiers have indeed reached an agreement and a consensus, we would be happy to hear from them about it. However, until we hear anything to the contrary, my opinion is that of Premier Hatfield when he said delay would only produce one thing, more delay, and that is what it has been doing.

AMENDING FORMULA

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, what is curious about the Prime Minister's position is that, while he pretends to be reasonable, he has before this House a motion of closure that would get this question out of Canada at the very time when there is an opportunity for agreement to be found in Canada. He might prefer Britain to settle our questions. We prefer Canadians to settle our questions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: If the trained sheep so graphically displayed in *Le Devoir* the other day would be quiet for a moment I would put my question to the Prime Minister. He said on Monday, in his long two hour and 20-minute speech before he sought to impose closure on the House, that he did not personally prefer the Victoria amending formula but he was proposing that amending formula only, he made it clear, because it had been the subject of agreement. My question to the Prime Minister

now is would he support another amending formula if it had agreement among the provinces?

• (1420)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition referred to many things, first of all to my long speech. I would point out that under the rules of this House the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition can speak without time limit. If he had more to say on the subject he would have made a longer speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Then we hear that closure is being imposed at the very time, in the words of the Leader of the Opposition, the very time the premiers are reaching agreement. Madam Speaker, the measure has been known to the premiers for many months now; I have no evidence that in the meetings they held in the fall and winter they reached agreement on anything. Why is he suggesting they reached agreement on anything now? If they had, surely we would have heard about it.

I think the Leader of the Opposition is only using this in the hope that he would destroy the chance of Canadians ever getting a charter of rights.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Holding Canada together.

Mr. Trudeau: He says he prefers holding Canada together.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Order, Madam Speaker. Even the Prime Minister is subject to the rules.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The Right Hon. Prime Minister should be answering the one question that was put to him by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

An hon. Member: He has not answered a thing yet.

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I am commenting on the very points raised by their leader. He raises some points. Surely fairness entitles me to deal with those points.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: When did you start dealing in fairness?

Mr. Trudeau: The Leader of the Opposition also suggested that he would prefer Canadians settle their questions rather than the British. So do we, and we are Canadians in this House and we represent Canada. And if the Leader of the Opposition really believes that, why have all his friends, the provincial premiers, why have they been in London for months lobbying the British?

An hon. Member: Where is Chrétien?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Where is Chrétien?