

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition guessed wrong again.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mulroney: He did. If I am not mistaken, the commercial does not say the Beaudoin-Dobbie report is a good report. The text of the commercial explains the contents of the report for the benefit of Canadians and Quebecers, so that Canadians and Quebecers will be able to make up their minds.

The House leader mentioned that I said the Beaudoin-Dobbie report was excellent. I did, but that is not what the Leader of the Opposition just said.

[*English*]

The House leader of the Liberal Party is suggesting that we are misstating the case. I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition has inadvertently misstated the fact that there is no such publicity being put forward. What is being put forward is explanatory publicity so Canadians can make up their minds about Beaudoin-Dobbie.

My mind is made up. I think the Beaudoin-Dobbie report is very good for Canada. I think that Canada itself does not need Beaudoin-Dobbie. I think it stands on its own. But I am ready to improve it with Beaudoin-Dobbie and anything else.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. He seems to be having trouble justifying the extremely cavalier attitude taken by his minister of defence. I do not think there is any doubt in anyone's mind in Quebec that the Prime Minister and his minister of defence do not see eye to eye on this very important matter concerning the constitutional proposals being offered to Quebec.

Government sponsored advertising to announce the highlights of the Beaudoin-Dobbie report is what we in the opposition consider a very positive gesture. But we do not understand—and that was the question—why the Prime Minister continues to tolerate in his cabinet a minister who has dissociated himself completely from the government's position in this respect.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Beaudoin-Dobbie report is not a government report. It is not government policy, although as a member of this House, I personally approve of the report. It is a report by a parliamentary committee that will be examined by the government—in fact, by governments. At the appropriate time, the government will present a plan that will be actively supported by all ministers, starting with the Minister of National Defence.

The hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel is astonished to see differences of opinion on constitutional matters, between me and the Minister of National Defence, for instance. Was he equally astonished when he was a great supporter of Meech Lake and the Leader of the Opposition was a fierce opponent of the accord?

[*English*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister makes a major mistake here. I want him to tell us why he is so desperate to play politics with the future of this country.

The credibility of the government is so low that in order to clinch a constitutional deal that will be acceptable all across Canada, he and his party need the support of the Liberal Party of Canada and the New Democratic Party of Canada. He should stop playing politics the way he is playing them.

I want to ask the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs a very simple question. Canadian Press quoted the minister of health as saying this morning: "It is logical that a referendum is one of those options of the government, so you have to look at a bill on a referendum in June".

I want to know from the minister if the legislation is ready and whether or not this legislation should be tabled in this House as urgently as possible. Certainly, if the legislation is ready and since our party has been advocating it for a long time, we would be most co-operative to pass the legislation immediately. Why does the government not come forward immediately with such legislation?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs is working very hard to obtain a successful