

Oral Questions

there would have to be some movement and some indication that the parties are coming closer together.

• (1120)

Hopefully the result of the ongoing consultations and discussions will result in drawing closer together all the parties involved to bridge some of the divergent views.

At an appropriate time, the Prime Minister may very well consider the very valuable suggestion the hon. Leader of the Opposition has proposed. Perhaps, at an appropriate time that might be the logical course. It is very much in the Prime Minister's style to try to build a consensus on these important issues. I think he would agree that there probably has to be some further ground-work done before that could take place.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister why he and his government do not think there is any value in providing an opportunity for the provincial premiers and the Prime Minister to sit around the same table and discuss the situation. I also want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister why he won't give Canadians a chance to hear about the government's plans in this respect, considering that the deadline for adopting the constitutional mechanism is June 23, which is not far off. We need more information on an issue that is vital to the future of this country.

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting for one minute that there is no value in the proposition advanced by the Leader of the Opposition.

What I am saying is that it is a matter of timing and at the appropriate time, perhaps that might be a logical course of action. As well, I can assure the hon. member that at the appropriate time the Prime Minister will be outlining the further approach the federal government will undertake to help resolve the impasse.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): My question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister in the absence of the Prime Minister. Will the government at least recog-

nize that it was an error, as we pointed out three years ago, to regard the Accord as a seamless web to which only egregious errors could be admitted. Will he recognize that there should be public participation, that the concerns of western alienation, the concerns of the northern people, so many of the concerns of the economic union of Canada, over the last three years all of these matters should have been considered?

Will the Deputy Prime Minister agree today that the consideration of the constitutional reform will be enlarged so that there will be some assurances that all of these concerns will be dealt with?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether the hon. member is outlining a new version of the official position of the Liberal party. It would seem that way.

This was a resolution that was passed by the House of Commons. It was supported by all political parties and the government is very grateful for that. While it was never suggested that the proposal was perfect, it was clearly suggested that it formed a basis for bringing together in a constitutional framework all the provinces and addressed many of the issues that required addressing.

It set the stage for the resolution of further ongoing constitutional issues, such as Senate reform, greater participation by the provinces in the appointment of the Senate and greater participation in the appointment of members to the Supreme Court, plus certain flexibilities that in a more accurate way reflect the diversity of this country. We felt, and obviously 10 of the then premiers felt, that this was the first step and was important enough to advance the whole cause of constitutional reform to more accurately reflect the reality of Canada.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, what has become clear over the last three years is that the Canadian people are not prepared, and for good reason, to accept the promises of the Prime Minister to deal with events subsequently. That is the reason we are urging and ask now that the Prime Minister show leadership again. Call the first ministers together and develop a concrete method of assuring that these subsequent stages will be arrived at in good faith and that they will be gone through.