

This was a national referendum and there was a commitment I have respected.

I wanted to have good documentation. I am happy to recognize by his silence that he accepts that we made the right decision.

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• (1135)

[Translation]

1992 REFERENDUM

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Still on the subject of the Charlottetown referendum, the Prime Minister said in the House that he did not want to act unlawfully like Mr. Mulroney.

My question is this: Would the Prime Minister indicate whether he still considers it unlawful for the Prime Minister of Canada to give his word to a colleague, without first obtaining the agreement of his cabinet?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): The Prime Minister can make commitments but has a duty to go to cabinet with his commitment, which I did this week. I talked to cabinet about this and they said: fine. The document then went to Treasury Board, to determine the amount. This is entirely legal. Payment is authorized by the government in accordance with certain government mechanisms. The commitment made previously was not a clear commitment to pay, and, in fact, Mr. Mulroney said so himself in the document you received. There was never any reference to specific procedures. As far as I am concerned, this payment is entirely legal.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says he discussed it with cabinet, and earlier, he told us he mentioned it to cabinet Tuesday. He confirmed that this is what happened. Are we to understand the Prime Minister called a cabinet meeting, while the next day, he told us there had been no satisfactory answer from former Prime Minister Mulroney? He said again today that there was sufficient and satisfactory reason to call a cabinet meeting to discuss the matter although the next day he said in the House he did not have an answer. Is that correct?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, everyone in the Press Gallery, everyone in this Parliament except the hon. member, knows that cabinet meets Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m. All the reporters are there for the Tuesday morning scrum. I raised the problem. I did not call a special meeting of cabinet. The problem had been making the headlines for several days. I talked about it. I said: This is what we could do if we receive confirmation from Mr. Mulroney, which, in fact, came two days later. We acted on that confirmation, but we also made sure we had the versions of Premier Harcourt, former Premier Bourassa, and the Premier of Ontario. You cannot be too careful when you are about to spend \$34 million. I did what I

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was supposed to do. I got the support of cabinet and the approval of Treasury Board for making this payment.

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[English]

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, recent dialogue in the House between the government and the official opposition over the issue of Quebec separation has taken the form of metaphors.

Leaders of the separatist forces have been called maestros leading a symphony. I would like to extend the metaphor to include the Prime Minister and ask him how long he intends to fiddle while the unity issue burns.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is not very complicated. We said the people of Quebec will stay in Canada if they have a good government in Ottawa that is preoccupied with the real issue of Canadians and Quebecers. I am talking about the creation of jobs and security of income for those who need it. That is the program of this party and this government.

Of course the PQ and the Bloc Québécois just talk Constitution and separation even though the people of Quebec would like them to talk about job creation.

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, it looks like we not only have fiddling, we have waffling.

Despite the Prime Minister's other dialogue, Canadians are concerned about the government's lack of action and dialogue on this thing.

• (1140)

By contrast, Reform will host a national unity town hall meeting on October 3, Monday next. Tune in.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what specific action the government has taken or plans to take to engage in this type of nationwide discussion with the people of Canada on this important subject?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in our party one thing is very clear and not very complicated. I told the Canadian people during the campaign that if they wanted to have Parliament discussing the Constitution all of the time not to vote for me. Now it is the Reform Party members who want to talk about the Constitution because when they try to talk about something else they are a complete failure.

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[Translation]

1992 REFERENDUM

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The more I hear his explanations, the more I see that it is nebulous. Given the troubling facts concerning the Prime Minister's statements in this House and