

Oral Questions

Quebec's distinct identity was not invented at Meech Lake. It has existed for a long, long time and enshrining it in the new Constitution merely sets the record straight and corrects the injustice of the "night of the long knives".

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[English]

RURAL REVITALIZATION DAY

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, today, March 21, is the first full day of spring. It also constitutes Rural Revitalization Day in Canada, a day for us to remember and to promote the quality of life for rural and small town Canadians.

Since the Tory government came to office, the quality of life in rural Canada has been in constant decline. The Tories have massacred VIA Rail, chopped the CBC budget, sent agriculture in a tail-spin, mismanaged fisheries, shut down several hundred post offices and promised to shut down all 5,221 rural post offices in Canada.

Canadians living in rural and small town areas have a right to their services. The very urban attitude of Canada Post toward our rural citizen reeks of arrogance toward so many Canadians. On behalf of my Liberal colleagues, I am pleased to stand in solidarity with Rural Dignity of Canada on this second annual Revitalization Day.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Today Premier McKenna of New Brunswick tabled in his legislature what he called a companion resolution, which he said was designed to respond to concerns people had expressed about the constitutional amendment of 1987.

Will the Prime Minister tell Parliament and the Canadian people today what is his response to the resolution of Premier McKenna, as presented to the New Brunswick legislature earlier this morning?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question on this important matter. While I was away I received a copy of the resolution, which we are now in the process of examining.

I view the approach by Premier McKenna as constructive and helpful, designed to be of assistance to Canada in resolving an important constitutional difficulty. I am going to examine it very carefully with my colleagues in that light, and respond as quickly as I can, perhaps tomorrow evening on television.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Prime Minister that members of Parliament will want to know whether it is the intention of the Prime Minister to speak to the Canadian people on television, in this House and through this House, or via some other means, bearing in mind his role as Prime Minister in a parliamentary system.

I also want to ask the Prime Minister whether he will not agree that the time has now arrived for a meeting to be called by him of all First Ministers, himself and the premiers of all the provinces, to discuss Premier McKenna's proposals? Does he not agree that the time has now come to take this step?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have never ruled out a First Ministers' conference on the constitution. I thought it would be important for the elements of success to be reasonably present before bringing all the First Ministers together. After examination of the premier's proposal and responses to it from various provincial premiers, I would then have to make that determination, which I will do as quickly as I can.

With regard to the remarks on television, I do not know the format it would take. Presumably it would follow formats that other Prime Ministers before me have pursued, further to either rules that exist for the—I am trying to answer the question.

I am just responding to my hon. friend, the Leader of the Opposition, that I suppose I will follow existing customs and conventions.

[Translation]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in the light of Premier McKenna's resolution, I want to ask the Prime Minister why he will not agree the time has come for him to call a meeting of provincial