

*Supply*

Canada's position of the past ten years. I think in all fairness, that this change must be mentioned in view of the fact that during a speech he made on January 16, 1990 at Ottawa University,—one of the very few substantial speeches he has made since assuming the leadership of his party,—the present Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada had clearly indicated that in his view Canada needed, as always in the past, a very strong central government to deal with all major problems for the benefit of all our regions. "A strong central government is more necessary than ever if we want to successfully meet the world challenges in the 1990s".

Mr. Speaker, if I bring this speech to your attention and that of all hon. members, it is because what the hon. member for Hamilton East has just told us represents a complete about face on the part of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend could not resist a partisan remark, which I find regrettable, to the effect that Mr. Chrétien is the only leader who had the courage to appear before the Bélanger-Campeau Commission. We, on this side of the House, cannot overlook such a remark. We find this altogether unacceptable and we cannot let such a statement go without setting the record straight. Mr. Speaker, such are the facts: I personally chaired a Parliamentary committee which produced a unanimous report from this House.

This report, although not the most popular, served as the basis for an agreement signed on June 9 of last year, between the provincial Premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada. Mr. Speaker, this agreement is known as the Charest Report. The Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada had said that he supported the Charest Report. However, between June 9 and June 23, he kept silent, something the Hon. Member for Hamilton East is not only aware, but something she blamed him for and with reason during the campaign for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. Today, I should like to know how in all fairness she can blame somebody else for lacking fortitude when Mr. Chrétien displayed such a total lack of courage when he failed to state his position on the June 9, 1990 agreement.

[English]

**Ms. Coppins:** Mr. Speaker, it is awfully hard for me to respond to the member's comments about the fact that I have been partisan in the light of the statement he has just made. It is incredible to me that a member on the government side of the House, who in fact undertook in the course of the last Parliament a process that would bring some of the other participants into the constitutional process, is now standing in his place trying to defend the actions of his government which caused the death of the constitutional accord.

I hope that the member does more than read the words of his leader at Buckingham. Perhaps the reason he thought they had been heard before is because the statement to which he refers in my speech was a statement made by the leader of the Liberal Party when he spoke before Bélanger-Campeau. Although the member may believe that his leader is leading the charge on this issue, I would agree with him that we need an approach that brings all political parties together.

What I have said here today I will defend in any part of this country. We need a parliamentary process to complement the process of public participation and to complement the process of private discussion that is now going on behind closed doors. If we do not have that parliamentary process by an expansion of the mandate of the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee, we will find ourselves in the same mess that we did with Meech Lake.

The member should understand that the reason that Meech was doomed to failure was because Senator Lowell Murray called it a seamless web. Had the senator understood, bearing in mind the sanctity of the five conditions of Quebec, that there was room to involve other questions, we probably would not be discussing a constitutional crisis here in the House today.

I supported the government of the day. I supported in a non-partisan way the initiative to find a solution. I realized it was not perfect, but I also felt that the process put in place by the Prime Minister doomed it to failure.

If you want to sell constitutional reform, with all the respect that I have for Senator Lowell Murray, you do not send a no name across the country to try to sell the accord in English Canada. The Prime Minister did a great job selling it in the province of Quebec. Everybody