

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL ACCESS AWARENESS WEEK**

country if we are going to get at the root causes of inflation and fiscal consolidation and bring about strength and durability in the Canadian economy. That is what we are all trying to achieve.

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs.

Will the minister advise the House and the people of Canada if he and the Prime Minister have now absolutely and without question rejected and ruled out the concept of a constituent assembly other than this House of Commons and the Senate?

If he has, will he give this House his undertaking that the recommendations of this Parliament of Canada will be accepted by the government without modification that the whole matter will be dealt with in an open way and that there will be no changes made behind closed doors.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think most of us who went through the Meech Lake experience will agree we are past the stage in which we want to have proposals put forward that have to be accepted without modification.

I certainly will be interested in the recommendations of the Beaudoin-Edwards committee. I think the whole House will be, and I will be looking for ways in which those can be applied.

With regard to a constituent assembly, the view of the government is known. We believe that it would be unfortunate to put aside a parliamentary system which by and large has worked in the country.

However, we recognize that this system has not earned the respect it requires. What we are proposing for the joint committee that would be established and operating in the summer and in the fall is a parliamentary base composed of members of this House and the other place, but using such elements of a constituent assembly or such other means that reach out to the people of Canada to ensure that we have the broadest possible participation in a process that will recommend the decisions that should reshape this country.

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State.

This is National Access Awareness Week and the theme is "Access is a Right". However, for blind people accessibility is obviously not a right.

The only money provided by this government through the CNIB for Braille services, talking books and teacher training for the blind is less than \$50,000 a year.

Does the minister really believe that \$50,000 out of a federal budget of \$160 billion this year is fair to the blind people of Canada?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly refer my hon. colleague opposite to the statement that we made in the Speech from the Throne.

We will be coming forth with a comprehensive package of measures dealing with accessibility for all disabled in this country: accessibility to housing, to employment, to transport, and to recreation.

The program is well in its definition phases and I hope to be able to make an announcement in the near future.

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, people are sick and tired of patronizing statements. What disabled people need is not sympathy. They need support.

In the United States, the federal government has taken the lead in the production and distribution of Braille and talking books. Is it not about time the government got serious and provided this essential service to blind Canadians?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the government is working very closely with the disabled to elaborate this five-year strategy that will be announced.

I have been dealing with them on a regular basis. The plan is coming along very well, and we will be able to announce it in the very near future.