

*Oral Questions*

that, I wonder whether the Prime Minister will assure the House that he will move immediately to appoint at least one more minister from those three provinces.

**An hon. Member:** Joe Guay?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the good wishes of the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming me back in the House. I was puzzled to see him grasp so tightly on the arm of his chair before he rose to ask the question.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Fraser:** He has a tighter grasp on the chair than you have on the cabinet.

**An hon. Member:** This is being recorded, Pierre.

**Mr. Trudeau:** It looked, Mr. Speaker, as if he were afraid the caucus would take away the only seat he has left.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I also thank the Leader of the Opposition for the constructive suggestions he has made in respect of my cabinet and I will take them seriously into consideration. If he wants any advice on his own shadow cabinet I would be happy to give it to him privately, Mr. Speaker. It would be more valuable.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I think two things are evident. The first is that the Prime Minister's practice of refusing to answer questions has survived the summer; the second is I have a considerably better grasp on my chair and my caucus than he has on his caucus.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

● (1420)

POSITION OF GOVERNMENT ON FORMULA FOR AMENDING  
CONSTITUTION AS STATED BY FORMER MINISTER OF NATIONAL  
DEFENCE

**Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister declines to advise us whether he has been able to find anyone else from western Canada to join his cabinet, I wonder if I might ask him whether, in light of the fact that there was apparently some extensive discussion between the former minister and the Prime Minister of the reasons cited for the former minister's resignation, the statements that were contained in the letter of resignation by the hon. member for Winnipeg South, particularly those statements which claim to set forth the government's firm position on an amending formula for the constitution, can be interpreted to represent in fact a final decision by the government on this question.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I have pointed out to the former minister of national defence, and I remind the Leader of the Opposition of this, that last March I wrote to the premiers and gave them three options whereby we thought we could patriate the constitution. Only

[Mr. Clark.]

one of them referred to language rights and an entrenched amending formula; at least one of the other two, as I recall, contained nothing on language rights. So, clearly if the Leader of the Opposition and the former minister of national defence recall the events, it would seem that both the action and the question are a little premature.

REQUEST FOR TABLING REPLY TO LETTER OF RESIGNATION OF  
MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** The clear implication in the letter from the most recent former minister—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Clark:** —was that there has been a narrowing of the options, and my question was precisely whether that in fact has been the case or whether the former minister of national defence in his letter misinterprets the position of the cabinet of which he was so recently a member. Perhaps in answering that question the Prime Minister might also indicate whether he would be prepared to table his reply to the letter of resignation of his former colleague and whether that reply would contain a detailed response to the positions set forth in a rather lengthy letter of resignation by the former minister.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** The answer is quite simple. There has been no change of position in cabinet on those three options. As I recollect, the matter was not even discussed substantially for the simple reason that twice since that letter was sent the premiers met amongst themselves, first in Alberta and then in Ontario, following two previous meetings, I believe, of the attorneys general in spring. I believe these were meetings during which the premiers and their attorneys general were attempting to define the position among themselves. I have not received the report of the chairman of that premiers' conference as yet, therefore I do not know what their position is. I do not know what their response to my three options will be, and I do not know that they have reached any firm agreement among themselves. There has been no change in the cabinet's views. We are awaiting the report of the chairman of the conference to discuss the matter and decide upon it. For that reason, I felt that the minister's resignation was premature. He was acting on the assumption that the premiers might agree, which is perhaps an unwise assumption.

**Mr. Clark:** Let me repeat, Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister agree to table in the House of Commons his reply to the letter of resignation of his minister?

**Mr. Trudeau:** When that reply has been received by the former minister of national defence, and if he agrees that his letter to me be tabled, I will certainly table the correspondence between him and me.