

Oral Questions

will have the support of the Parliament of Canada in doing that.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, still on the subject of the Constitution, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Why did the proposals tabled yesterday take such a timid approach to economic union, when three provinces, and perhaps the majority of Canada's population, will be allowed to opt out, and when in the Allaire report, the Quebec Liberal Party supported the following proposal, and I quote: "Canadian legislatures must drop all restrictions on the free circulation of persons, goods and capital." Why not do in Canada what has already been done in Europe?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the proposal concerning sections 121 and 91 is basically a response to requests by Mr. Parizeau, Mr. Bourassa, the Quebec Liberal Party and everyone who wants a stronger and tighter economic union in this country. That is exactly what we are suggesting. Our proposals reflect the traditional claims of a number of interested parties, including the leading players in Quebec. The new powers proposed under section 91 would allow the federal government to make laws for the efficient functioning of the economic union. However, this new power is not unlimited, being subject to approval by 7/50, with an opting out provision for Quebec, for instance.

So the nonsense we heard last night on television from people who said this power would savage Quebec is just not true, and Canadians and Quebecers know it isn't true.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. The vast majority of Canadians and Quebecers are in favour of economic union. However, if we are going to get anywhere in this debate, we must first lay a number of fears to rest. Obviously, economic union does not and should not affect our major economic development institutions: *La Caisse de dépôt et placement*, the *Caisse populaires* and the Heritage Fund. Does the Prime Minister agree with this position?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I agree entirely with what my hon. friend has just said. In any case, the objectives of economic union are quite clear. They are: to enhance productivity in

Canada, to improve our competitive position and to make our country more prosperous. According to the MacDonald Commission and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, one of the benefits of economic union would be an annual savings of \$1,500 for every Canadian family with two children. I think we can say that for the average Canadian, this is indeed a vast improvement.

Our main objective in this respect is to achieve economic union, something, as I said earlier, Mr. Parizeau and Mr. Bourassa have always wanted and something General de Gaulle always wanted for Europe, a Europe that will be integrated in 1992. In Europe it all started with the Treaty of Rome, and then it was General de Gaulle. I always thought if it was good enough for General de Gaulle, it is good enough for me.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): I remember General de Gaulle, and I am not so sure about that, Mr. Prime Minister!

[*English*]

I have a supplementary question for the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs.

In the constitutional project the government has proposed that property rights be enshrined, that the residual powers be transferred to the provinces, and that mining and forestry be withdrawn from the federal ambit. These are very controversial proposals and they are going to engender a great deal of debate. Regrettably, however, that is for another day.

My question is quite specific. Will the minister assure this House that there is nothing in any one of these proposals that will in any way, shape or form inhibit the federal government's authority either to enact or enforce strong, national, environmental legislation?

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I may give those assurances to the hon. member on behalf of my hon. friend. In any case, a new low in political commentary was reached last night when Canadians and Quebecers were told that constitutional reform was a threat to the *Caisse de dépôt*, the *Caisse populaire*, and Hydro-Québec. Why not the Nordiques and Michel Louvain? This is insane! It is ludicrous. Quebecers are smarter than that. They know perfectly well that these constitutional proposals are intended to strengthen Canadian unity and to strengthen our eco-