

Oral Questions

Meanwhile, the Leader of the Opposition and future leader of the Parti Québécois said in English, referring to the Constitution, that he did not believe it would be possible to formulate any offers, that they were not interested. That is what the Leader of the Opposition said, and we do not want to impose constitutional changes if he says Quebec does not want them.

[English]

The Speaker: I remind all members not to use props of any kind.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two days ago, the Prime Minister made a suggestion to extend the deadline of the phoney committee chaired by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, whose mandate, according to its chairman, is to save Canada by reviewing all the options to renew federalism.

Can the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs tell us if he still intends to table the report of the phoney committee before Christmas or if he will grab the line thrown by the Prime Minister to gain a little more time?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I should first set the record straight. As I said before, the perfect example of a phoney committee is the Parti Québécois's regional commissions, in which the Bloc Québécois took part.

I would like to remind them that there are five million voters in Quebec, not 50,000, and that their commissions were not representative and did not try to find conclusions that would help Quebec and Canada, while our committee is looking at all the options and seeking solutions to our problems.

Once again, we are holding out our hand in good faith to the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois and urging them to soften their stance and negotiate a renewed federalism, as 80 per cent of Quebecers are asking them to do.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that the minister has a vivid imagination. He said that his committee's mandate was to review all the options in order to honour the Prime Minister's referendum promises, because the Prime Minister did make promises. But the Prime Minister is now turning his back on constitutional change. This is a remake of 1980, an old movie that we have seen before, but we have since gained 10 per cent. Soon we will gain even more in less time.

In this context, can the minister tell us what the phoney committee still has as a mandate? Should he not dismantle it instead, since the Prime Minister has decided as usual not to offer Quebec anything?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the hon. member's statements are wrong. As the Deputy Prime Minister said, the Prime Minister clearly stated in Verdun that we would keep open all other avenues of change, including administrative and constitutional changes.

Yesterday in the House, the Prime Minister said this:

I never said we were going to change the Constitution—I said we were going to make changes to the federation, constitutional changes, if necessary—

There is no contradiction between the two sentences. It is the official opposition that will not abide by the results of the referendum, which showed very clearly that Quebecers want change, but within Canada.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we are being reminded again today by the Bloc Québécois that in the referendum campaign the federal Liberals made a couple of constitutional offers to Quebec. Despite the referendum loss the Government of Quebec and its future premier have already made it clear that they reject these offers and further that they would reject any offers of renewed federalism.

• (1425)

Will the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs make it clear today for all Canadians that the Government of Canada will not make further constitutional offers to a PQ government that has no intention of accepting them and that Canadians are sick and tired of playing this game with the separatists?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it is true that the Leader of the Opposition, thinking about his future role as premier of Quebec, indicated that he would not consider any offers to renew federalism.

However, in saying that the leader was refusing to recognize the result of the referendum where the majority of Quebecers told him that they wanted changes to be made within Canada. He was also refusing to respect the majority of Quebecers who have expressed their views.

We will not do the same thing to Quebecers. We will be in a position to offer ways in which the present problems can be solved.