

*Oral Questions*

● (1415)

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I have the transcript. May I just reread the question:

So Mrs. Thatcher in fact said there would be no problems under any circumstances in giving British consent to patriation?

**Mr. McKinnon:** Read it all.

**Mr. Trudeau:** Well, the Leader of the Opposition just read it all. I want to know what I said Mrs. Thatcher said. It is not customary, when I afterwards meet the press in a scrum, to go into any details about what transpired in a discussion between two Prime Ministers or two heads of government. I was following this line at that point. I was following it in agreement with the British Prime Minister, that we would not get into details on this question. That is the reason why, when I came out from Downing Street, I did not go into any details. I put my customary brave front on by saying that the package was so good that the provinces would agree, that I was a Liberal, I was optimistic and I was confident that this whole thing would go through. This is what I told the press.

I have since indicated that in the private meeting—and in this I am not purporting to speak for Mrs. Thatcher, I am speaking for myself—I made it clear to her that we would be proceeding with or without the consent of all the provinces.

**Mr. Clark:** Madam Speaker, if the Prime Minister emerging from a meeting with another Prime Minister wants to say “no comment”, he says “no comment”. What this Prime Minister said was that the Prime Minister of Great Britain did not say there would be no problems under any circumstances and that he did not ask her to say that. That was his statement on June 25. We now have a different version of the truth here in the House of Commons today. The Prime Minister, again referring to the transcript of his remarks when he did not say “no comment” but answered specifically, according to documents released by his office, was asked the question:

Do you think that there could be any difficulty in Westminster if the Canadian provinces and the federal government themselves are still at odds over the situation?

The Prime Minister of Canada replied to that question by saying:

Well, that's a hypothesis that I didn't ask her to examine—

He said quite explicitly that he did not ask her to examine that hypothesis. He also said quite explicitly, “I don't believe she did examine it”. Can we accept as being the truth that statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on June 25?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Madam Speaker, I can only ask the Leader of the Opposition to read on, where I said after the words he quoted:

I assured her that next September I will be meeting the premiers after a full summer of work and that we hope to come either in the fall or later in the course of the next year with proposals which, I hope, are a final recourse to the British Parliament to end this situation . . . I'm optimistic about that and I didn't ask her to speculate on any other hypothesis.

I was saying then what I have always said for the past ten years, that I hope to proceed without opposition from the

provinces, that I hope to have a consensus. That is why in the past ten years we have never moved to Great Britain, because we did not have the unanimous support of the provinces.

I was still saying that publicly in June to the press and to others because I did not want to make it obvious then that we were not hopeful about consensus, that we were determined to go even if the consensus did not exist. This is what I was saying publicly to the press in scrums and in press conferences. I repeat, this is what I have been saying for the past ten years. I was saying I was a Liberal, that I was optimistic, that I was hopeful in the course of the summer the Minister of Justice and his opposite numbers would put the piece together. That is what I was saying publicly.

Privately, I have told the House that I warned Mrs. Thatcher that we had never had unanimity for 53 years and it was possible, indeed quite likely because we had a separatist government leading one province, that we would not get unanimity. I stand on that, Madam Speaker. I can only say that until Mrs. Thatcher is prepared to say the contrary, and my word must stand. If she says she will not comment because she will not reveal a confidence, I hereby authorize her to say the contrary, if it is true.

The House has been told, and I repeat it today, that I told her there would likely not be unanimity and I did not know if there would be full consent of the provinces, but that we would come nonetheless in September or at some point in the course of the following session. I recognized when I talked to the press that I was still putting on perhaps the show of hoping against all hope that, in spite of 53 years of failure to get unanimity, perhaps we would get it this summer.

● (1420)

**Mr. Clark:** Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister calls it a “show.” Other people would call it other things when someone says one thing publicly and a different thing privately, which is what the Prime Minister has done.

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

**Mr. Clark:** The Prime Minister has made it clear, at least in public, that he did not ask the Prime Minister of Great Britain to examine the hypothesis of there being disagreement in Canada which, of course, was what resulted. Let me ask the Prime Minister a question about an apparent attempt at clarification that occurred. Can he tell us whether there has ever been a written request by the Canadian government to the government at Westminster to clarify in writing how Westminster would proceed with a joint resolution on the Constitution from Canada and, if there was such a written request, will the Prime Minister tell us both when the request was made and the reply was received, and will the Prime Minister table the written request and the written reply so that this House of Commons and the whole country will know if the reply was limited to assurances that the joint resolution would simply be presented, not passed, to the Parliament at Westminster?