

Again I hope that our socialist friends read *The Globe and Mail*. Perhaps they will stop ranting about things and learn a little more about what is common knowledge in the mining community.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

BELANGER-CAMPEAU COMMISSION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In the wee hours of the morning today a vote was taken at the Belanger-Campeau Commission in Quebec which could set the stage for the end of Canada.

At a time when leadership means standing to be counted, the Prime Minister and his party abstained in the vote.

Why did the Prime Minister refuse to stand and be counted for Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as usual my friend, the Acting Leader of the Opposition is, to put it charitably, only partly right.

In the wee hours of this morning there was not one vote. There were many votes taken at the Belanger-Campeau Commission, including the key vote which asked the members to endorse sovereignty as the preferred choice of Quebecers. The member of this government, Mr. Hogue, along with a member of her party, voted solidly against that petition.

With regard to what evolved as the ultimate package, and it having become clear that this might be endorsed by a larger number of people and become the basis of the negotiating position of the Government of Quebec, it was in respect of that appropriate that Mr. Hogue, who is the only member there as a member of the federal government that may be called upon to begin negotiations at an appropriate point in time, neither speak for nor against what is their bargaining position.

An hon. member: Their bargaining position?

Mr. Mulroney: Their bargaining position, exactly. It is one that would be set out by the Government of the Province of Quebec.

Oral Questions

I find it very interesting that last week the Acting Leader of the Opposition rose and asked all parties in the House to depoliticize the question of national unity and today, quite in error and with mischief, is trying to politicize something that should be depoliticized.

[Translation]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the timeframe agreed upon by the majority of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission to give Canada an ultimate chance is much narrower. That is why we could not approve the report.

But everyone agrees that the status quo is no longer satisfactory. We need a thorough reform if we want this country to survive.

Given the tight schedule we are stuck with, whether we like it or not, when will the Prime Minister show national leadership and disclose his own agenda so that a consensus can be achieved as to the necessary reforms for a new Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, my friend is absolutely right. The status quo is no longer satisfactory and has not been since the Constitution was patriated in 1981-1982. In-depth changes were needed and some, although modest, were agreed upon in the Meech Lake Accord which my friend supported.

In spite of these modest changes endorsed by the Liberal Party as well as the New Democratic Party, a Premier, the Premier of Newfoundland, failed to have them confirmed by a vote in the legislature of his province.

The fact remains nonetheless that deep changes are needed as I advocated in a speech I made in Buckingham. As a matter of fact, that is one of the reasons for setting up the Spicer Commission as well as the Edwards-Beaudoin Special Joint Committee. It is also one of the reasons why the government House leader gave notice to the hon. members last week that they will be involved more closely in a parliamentary process aimed precisely at preparing reforms for Canada.

• (1420)

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is accusing me of politicizing the debate. I say that if anyone in this House is politicizing the debate, that person, is right across the way. When the time comes to make a critical decision on a question as