

Oral Questions

During the Easter holiday, the April 22nd issue of the newspaper *Le Devoir* published an article which stated in part, and I quote:

In a letter dated April 10 addressed to his provincial counterparts, letter of which *Le Devoir* has obtained a copy, the Prime Minister stated strongly that "there is now agreement in principle on the need to recognize in the Constitution the distinct character of the Quebec society".

Over the weekend, Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, who was certainly speaking for the Government, dealt with this issue. This morning, he was reported in the newspapers as saying:

[*English*]

We would prefer an approach to Quebec's concerns that did not specifically single out the province for special mention.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

May I ask the Prime Minister which of the two positions is the Government's?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there is no contradiction between the statement made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the actual communications between the Premiers and myself. I believe the Quebec Premier indicated as soon as he received the letters themselves that he felt they represented real progress and would result in ending the Constitutional impasse. If one considers the documents themselves and not their interpretation by the press, one finds that some progress has been made in this area.

REQUEST THAT CORRESPONDENCE WITH PREMIERS BE TABLED

Mr. Raymond Garneau (Laval-des-Rapides): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's letter dated April 10 contradicts what was said by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, that much is obvious to anyone who can read. Now to avoid all these interpretations, could the Prime Minister—

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Mr. Garneau: Quiet back there!

I would like to ask the Prime Minister—

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Mr. Garneau: They certainly are keyed up this morning. They weren't in the House to talk about the death penalty, but now they are raring to go.

Mr. Speaker, could the Prime Minister—

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: I am sure all Hon. Members would like to hear the question asked by the Hon. Member.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garneau: Mr. Speaker, could the Prime Minister table in the House his correspondence with the provincial premiers so that we will not have to depend on what we are told by the media—I don't know whether the admissions are voluntary or involuntary—who are giving us the contents of these letters piecemeal?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is pretty sharp today. His new glasses must have changed his perception!

I would like to say, and the Hon. Member knows this as well as I do, that the Secretary of State for External Affairs is very sympathetic towards Quebec and the francophone dimension of this country. This has been amply proven in the past. On the weekend, I was in touch with all the premiers who were in Canada, in an attempt to make some progress on this matter. I can say that the premiers' reaction is positive. We are aware of the problems and the challenges that remain, and we are not taking anything for granted. Nevertheless, I think that the attitude of the premiers who have had a chance to look at the documentation provided by Senator Murray and myself is, as Premier Bourassa said on the weekend, modestly encouraging. We will have a major challenge to meet this Thursday evening. We are going to work hard and work together in a spirit of national unity, in an attempt to find—

Mr. Garneau: Are you going to table those documents?

Mr. Mulroney: The Hon. Member asks whether we are going to table them. At the appropriate time, certainly. We will inform our colleagues of all documents that were submitted and all measures that were approved or rejected by the parties concerned. My hon. friend is of course aware that these are delicate negotiations. I hope I can count on his support and encouragement.

Mr. Garneau: I wouldn't know what to support since you don't have a position.

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[*English*]

ENERGY

PROPOSED SALE OF DOME PETROLEUM—ACCEPTABILITY OF AMOCO

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to let the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources off the hook. I am sorry I cannot quote him fables from La Fontaine but I remind him that Yogi Berra once said: "It ain't over 'til it's over".

Is the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources aware of Amoco's past record? Its president is American and it does not have a Canadian on the board of directors. There are no