

Oral Questions

My hon. friend says we have not demonstrated it. For example, today in the *Toronto Star* there is a headline which says "Economic optimism in Canada leaps to a three-year high," which means that the policies of this government are taking effect.

My hon. friend quotes a few economists in regard to the economic difficulties we are having. Well, we are having difficulties. We are emerging from a recession. Interest rates have dropped 408 basis points since their high, and we are now in the process of coming back.

Yesterday I had the privilege of spending an hour and a half with the Secretary-General of the OECD. He indicated that in its reports it would be commenting on the fact that the policies of deficit reduction, free trade and the GST of this government are contributing to a modernizing of the economy and that Canada's economy will soon be regarded again as one of the strongest in the industrialized world.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, during Question Period, I asked the Prime Minister three times how he intended to obtain a mandate for restructuring this country. Today, it was reported in one of the newspapers that the Premier of New Brunswick and the Prime Minister had discussed the possibility of having a national referendum on the Constitution. Is that how the Prime Minister intends to obtain this mandate?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I did not see the report but I have discussions on a regular basis with all provincial Premiers. Last night, I spoke to the Premier of Ontario who said that this afternoon he intended to make a major and, I assume, very useful speech on national unity. Of course, when we discuss these issues, we cover a range of possibilities, but we are not committed to one idea in particular at this time, especially since Beaudoin-Edwards is now considering the matter of the amending process, including referendums. The commission is to report in the near future, and with the hon. member, we will look at the results.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. Clearly Canadians need to know what is happening in all stages of constitutional development in his country. Canadians want to be involved and they want to know. One of the key issues is how we open up the constitutional process to all Canadians.

The Prime Minister has said that he will not work on a timetable other than Canada's timetable. But there is a timetable set through Quebec. Quebec has said that it wants the option of a referendum in 1992. We cannot ignore that timetable.

We also read today that there is a report from his deputy ministers who are working on the Constitution and have put in interim reports. Will the Prime Minister table those reports in the House today so that we can all share from that thinking and so that all of us can participate in that debate with full knowledge of what the Prime Minister is working on and what his officials are working on?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would have some difficulty tabling any reports from the deputy ministers inasmuch as I have never seen one. To the best of my knowledge there has never been any report submitted to me, to my office, or to the cabinet. I can assure my hon. friend that I have not seen hide nor hair of any report from any deputy minister with regard to the question she raises.

I will examine them when they come in and I will be happy to discuss them with the leader of the NDP in her capacity as a member of the Privy Council. We can decide the extent to which they could be tabled at that point in time.

I just want to point out to the leader of the NDP that contrary to her prefatory remarks, I never said that we were going to ignore Quebec's deadlines as set out. I said we were going to follow our own, and in the process of following our own, established by the sovereign Parliament of a sovereign nation, we will seek to accommodate the wishes expressed by others to the extent humanly possible. It seems to me that this is a fundamental Canadian question that ought to be decided by the Parliament of Canada.