

Oral Questions

If we held it and some of the provinces disagreed, the premiers would quite properly say: "Who do you think you are? We already have a constitutional arrangement since 1982 which requires and mandates the approval of seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population and anything at variance with that is unconstitutional."

Therefore, we could not execute it even if we wanted to. We are stuck with an amending formula that has been there since 1982. We must try within the difficult parameters of that reality to consult with people, to try and make sure that—

An hon. member: It is meaningless.

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend says that it is meaningless. It may be, but it is part of the Constitution. I do not think she is suggesting that we can arbitrarily or capriciously change that because the only thing that was lacking in that Constitution of 1982 was the province of Quebec, the signature of Quebec.

We are trying to bring the country together. In that process, we would not want to do something that would be unconstitutional. I think my hon. friend would agree with that.

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

No one has ever suggested in this House nor do I believe have the people who served on the two committees I referred to ever suggested that a referendum was to supersede the constitutional amending formula process. No one has ever suggested that in this House nor in those committees.

We talked today about 1978. We talked about 1980. We talked about 1982. Now could we talk about 1992?

There have been two reports unanimously supported by the three parties saying that a consultative referendum should have an interpretive mechanism and that interpretive mechanism should be the regional majority and national majority.

I would ask the Prime Minister again if he is prepared to respect those recommendations which I have to assume were taken in full knowledge of the current amending formula in the Constitution and were taken by

those three parties in good faith that this would be as a serious part of any referendum considered by his government or any future government.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend says that she is not recommending something that is going to supersede the constitutional process.

Well, what is it going to do? What is it going to do? What would the results—

An hon. member: That is what she is asking you.

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend says that is what she is asking me. I understand that.

I am asking her in light of the Constitution why she is asking me something that is already resolved by the Constitution.

Ms. Hunter: Do you want to switch places?

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend says: "Let's switch places".

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, may I say with affection and respect that I do not think Canada is ready to have happen to it what is happening to Ontario.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I agree, say, with the question of a regional majority or I agree with a double majority, or say the House would declare that it was in favour of a provincial majority in each province. It might be a very interesting and important statement but it would have no constitutional value whatsoever.

That is because the constitutional amending formula of 1982 requires the permission of the duly elected legislatures of seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population. There is nothing we can do to change that unless, as we did at Meech Lake, we get the agreement of the provinces to so agree.

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PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.