

Oral Questions

continue to say so. One of the problems is that a number of people, for some reason which I fail to understand, seem to take great amusement in continuing to build anxiety among a community which does not need it. They are prompted by comments which are made from time to time in this place. It is further complicated and egged on by questions we are receiving from across the floor today.

CANADIAN EGG MARKETING AGENCY FORECAST

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, it is the National Dairy Council of Canada which is concerned, not just the Opposition, and this letter was written after the Minister spoke in the House of Commons yesterday. I want to know the answer to the question I put and I also want to know whether or not the Minister agrees with CEMA, the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency, which wrote a few days ago to all Members of Parliament that if we had free trade on eggs and egg products, our economy would lose about \$124 million and 3,000 jobs per year and our industry would lose between two-thirds and three-quarters of our producers? Does the Minister agree with this since the Minister for International Trade said herself that non-tariff barriers are now on the table? Does he agree or does he not?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, there are an awful lot of "ifs" there. May I add one more? If the Canadian Dairy Commission, the dairy farmers of Canada, CEMA, and some of the other people would spend a little more time listening to what we have been saying in this House and what we are putting into the record, we might be better off.

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[Translation]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

INFORMAL MEETINGS WITH QUEBEC ON CONSTITUTION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, this morning the Government announced that a First Ministers' meeting will be held on April 30 to discuss the Constitution and Quebec. However, we are struck once again by the lack of any specific commitment on the part of the Government. This morning, Senator Murray said: "We are still in the preliminary stages, and discussions will be informal". I would like to ask the Prime Minister how this Government, after two and a half years of promises and hedging on those promises, can announce another informal meeting without putting its own proposals on the table.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member may know, or perhaps he has forgotten, that it is not up to the federal Government to conclude a bilateral constitutional agreement with the Government of Quebec. Under the constitutional accord, it

takes the approval of seven Governments with 50 per cent of the population. With the co-operation of the Government of Quebec, we have started a series of consultations that have led to increasingly valid and important definitions. Since the First Ministers, in the circumstances, have had to spend more time on the issue of trade with the United States, we have met four times so far to discuss the issue, and two more meetings are scheduled. I repeat, because of the circumstances, there has been less emphasis on getting ahead with the constitutional issue. Considering yesterday's debate and this evening's vote, I thought that, since the constitutional question as it affects aboriginal peoples will be dealt with in two weeks' time, it would be a good thing to call a meeting of First Ministers in order to get some views on the constitutional question as it concerns Quebec. I think the time is ripe for the Premiers of the provinces and the Prime Minister of Canada to give this matter further consideration.

PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, I think we have to admit there is a question of leadership here. Mr. Bourassa has made his proposals known. The Liberal Party got into the act last year, and even the NDP announced its position recently. It is certainly high time Canadians knew where the federal Government stands.

Mr. La Salle: They remember your position.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): I want to ask the Prime Minister, who today seems to be full of good intentions: Could he commit himself now to tabling his own proposals at the meeting on April 30 with the Premiers?

Mr. La Salle: I remember.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have some very specific ideas about the formula we would like to see in connection with Quebec's approval of the constitutional accord. To me and my colleagues, it is very important for our national unity that Quebec be able to give its approval as soon as possible to the constitutional document. However, under the constitutional agreement concluded by the previous Government, it is not enough for the Parliament of Canada to agree with the proposals. We need the approval of the provincial Premiers. We are meeting with and trying to persuade the Premiers, including for instance the Premier of Ontario, who is—

An Hon. Member: What is your position?

Mr. Mulroney: He is asking what our position is. The important thing is to find out whether the Premiers will endorse a joint proposal. The Government of Ontario, for instance, in the absence of Quebec, and I'm just naming one province, has a very important role to play. We want to know, and the provincial Premiers want to know, whether we can agree on and then ratify, a document that will finally make it