

*Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**SUPPLY**

## ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—THE CONSTITUTION

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Ms. McLaughlin (p. 18331).

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** At the suspension of the debate at 1 p.m. the Acting Leader of the Opposition had the floor. She has six minutes left. The hon. member for Hamilton East.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sheila Cops (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, I think that many members of this House welcome what the Prime Minister said about the importance of Canada, about a renewed federalism, a federalism in tune with the new needs of Canada. That being said, I fear that the process this Prime Minister is establishing will deny that possibility.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, we are supposed to live in a parliamentary democracy. That means the will of the people should be expressed through the assembly of their elected representatives. This should be obvious.

Why do I care to remind the House of this simple fact? Because as we are entering this period of far-reaching reform, the Prime Minister is ignoring Parliament.

Quebec has understood very well how our system works. Immediately after the death of Meech Lake, the National Assembly established an extended parliamentary commission to look at all aspects of Quebec's political and constitutional future.

The legislatures of Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba and New Brunswick also set up parliamentary commissions to look at this issue. All parties are represented in those groups. These provinces will be holding public hearings and will be coming up with specific parliamentary reports.

This is the real way to allow public input and public discussion. What has this Prime Minister done, Mr. Speaker? What has this federal government done? The

Prime Minister has denied the right of the truly elected representatives of Parliament to look at an issue of utmost importance, the very existence of this country and the division of powers that will flow therefrom.

Four months after the failure of Meech, the Prime Minister set up a group to travel across the country to let citizens vent their frustrations and their views. Such a forum is not a substitute for Parliament. Nearly six months after the failure of Meech, the government created a special joint committee of the House and Senate, but immediately after creating this committee, it tied the hands of parliamentarians.

[Translation]

The government explicitly limited the mandate of the committee, and I quote: “—investigate and report on the process for amending the Constitution, including proposals to revise one or more amending formulae.”

Mr. Speaker, every time it was suggested in this House by the Liberal Party to broaden the mandate of the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee, the Prime Minister said no. Every time we propose setting up an extended parliamentary commission to study all aspects of the Constitution, the Prime Minister argues that this idea could be considered on an opposition day.

Mr. Speaker, I am no fool. The mandate of the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee prevents it from even listening to the people who want to express their opinions on anything besides the amendment formula. The Prime Minister tied the hands of parliamentarians by denying us the chance to examine thoroughly the true issues, including the division of powers, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and any other question dealing with the basis of what makes this country we call ours, Canada.

A group of people coming from here and there, such as the members of the Citizens' Forum, can never be a substitute for Parliament. To claim the contrary, as the Prime Minister is doing, shows great contempt for our democratic institutions. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister must realize that the failure of Meech is the result of an in camera process. I do not want and we do not want this to happen again. That is why we ask the Prime Minister again to broaden the present mandate of the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee. If he refuses, we should at least, in