

Oral Questions

I believe that we can put together the kinds of proposals that are responsive to the needs not only of Quebec, but of the west, the north, Atlantic Canada and Ontario. Then we can devise, perhaps, a new Canada; a better, more modern, more flexible and more united Canada.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said clearly outside the House: "We have a pretty good idea of where we want to go in the timeframes we would like to respect." Obviously, he has a plan in mind.

Does he not believe it is about time he shares that plan with the people of Canada? Does he not realize that if he waits until after Easter and until the throne speech, every hour lost is an hour lost for this country that we all love, Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the urgency inherent in the question of my hon. friend, but I indicated in the House of Commons in the past that this is a sovereign Parliament of a great and sovereign nation.

This Parliament shall establish the timeframes and not the legislature or political party in any province. We have a country. The country is called Canada. We are going to keep this country together by working together to the timeframes and the objectives of Canada.

In the process of doing that, we will by every reasonable means seek to observe and respect the wishes of others that emanate from other legislatures. That is not unreasonable.

The fundamental objectives must be set by legislators in the interests of all Canadians and within timeframes that all Canadians will find reasonable. I am not unaware of what is happening elsewhere, but I insist on the supremacy and the primacy of this House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. With the Bélanger-Campeau report, Quebec has lobbed the ball back into the federal court, all of which has taken place in a climate of political crisis and economic decline created by this government. Canada needs profound political change but it also needs economic change.

Unemployment and poverty are increasing in Canada. Fifty thousand children are going hungry in Montreal alone. My question is this: How does the Prime Minister intend to persuade Quebecers to accept his new political contract, considering that his economic contract and his obsolete policies have failed?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of comment all parliamentarians should try to avoid in this debate on national unity. Federalists in Canada and Quebec are not that numerous nowadays—

Some hon. members: True!

Mr. Mulroney:—that we can afford to indulge in such mean-spirited accusations. We need all our allies. We need everyone. And I would urge the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard to contribute actively to this debate and do so positively and constructively. Instead of tarnishing the reputation of the federalist forces, help us build this new Canada!

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, I can't believe this! The country is in a crisis, and all the Prime Minister has to offer is clichés.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister may not think the economy is important, but yesterday two of Canada's leading economists testified that this government's economic policies were: "destructive, caused vast damage, were nonsensical." The economists then went on to say that this government's policies would result in higher unemployment, more bankruptcies and a higher deficit. Mike McCracken and Doug Peters were the two economists.

The issue is, can a nation that is deprived of hope by its leaders, hope to hold together? The question is, why can this Prime Minister not bring himself to understand the inevitable link between national unity and a sound economy.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend asks if I understand the link between a sound economy and national unity. I assume that we all understand that. You do not have to be a Liberal or an NDP or a Conservative, I think everybody understands how important it is.