

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why the government brought in legislation in respect of a referendum was precisely to keep open for Parliament that option in the event that the premiers or the first ministers failed to agree on methods of strengthening Canada and strengthening our Constitution including the economic union.

As my hon. friend knows, I have not set aside at all any of the possibilities. I will be meeting with the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs, with Mr. Tellier and with others over the next couple of days. I will be consulting with the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the NDP. We will take whatever actions are appropriate to do what most of us in this House—not all, there are a few exceptions—want to do and what most Canadians want to do.

They want to keep Canada and they want the economy modernized. As well they want the Constitution modernized, brought up to date for 1992.

**Mr. Chrétien:** They want to be consulted.

**Mr. Mulroney:** My hon. friend says that they want to be consulted. Indeed I think he would acknowledge there has been historic consultation in the process so far. No doubt we could do more, but most of all the objective is to strengthen Canada, to maintain Canada, and to promote and strengthen the unity of Canada.

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North):** Mr. Speaker, this side of the House shares with the Prime Minister the desire to see a true economic union in Canada. It has been an essential element in our position on the Constitution from the very beginning.

So it has been for many governments in the past. There have been governments after governments, not just 10 years ago but for most of Canada's 125 years, that have asked for or sought a true economic union in our country.

Could the Prime Minister state whether that is a basic position of his government on completing the constitutional talks? Is he committing his government to that requirement? If so, could he tell the House which of the provinces have now agreed to a true economic union in our country?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I think I have indicated that many people

including the Leader of the Opposition have regretted the fact that among the weaknesses of the 1981-82 arrangement was the absence of this kind of economic union clause.

When we brought forward our proposals, I think on September 23 or September 28 last, they contained recommendations in regard to an economic union. They then found their way into the Beaudoin-Dobbie report. We have been building on this, trying to persuade the provinces of not only the value but the indispensable nature of lowering barriers to trade among Canadians.

That has been our objective. The Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs and Mr. Tellier are out today doing precisely that.

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North):** Mr. Speaker, I do not recall that in the Meech Lake proposals there was any such commitment on the part of the government.

Let me ask the Prime Minister this. He himself has drawn attention to the rapidity with which Europe is moving toward a single market. Here in North America this government has committed itself to a North American free trade agreement with enforceable provisions.

Is it his commitment to the Canadian people that in seeking a true economic union in Canada there will be provision for its enforcement through an internal trade tribunal or some other device to ensure compliance with a true economic union in our country?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell my hon. friend that I certainly would not be opposed in any way to that kind of concept.

I find it very strange indeed that provincial premiers would be asking, for example, for some jurisdiction in international trade. They want to play a larger role in international trade. I can understand their request, but they turn around the next day and are disinclined even to lower barriers from one province to another.

It is a kind of advanced thinking in respect of international trade but very parochial thinking in some cases in regard to trade among provinces in Canada.

My hon. friend says that the Meech Lake proposals did not contain an economic union clause. He is quite right. As he will remember, the premiers met in August 1986 in Edmonton. The premiers requested the Quebec round designed specifically to bring Quebec back into the signing of the Constitution.