

Oral Questions

The second question that I should like to ask is this: since the Prime Minister has said that Mr. Ryan's recommendation was welcome, this is already a step in the right direction. In any case, it is the first time we have heard the Prime Minister say in the House of Commons that Mr. Ryan's recommendation would be welcome. The leader of the Quebec Liberal party also indicated to the federal government that it would be wise to wait until the Supreme Court has ruled on the legality of the constitution, since some provinces have already expressed the wish to ask for such a ruling.

Under the circumstances, would the Prime Minister be at least willing to give an affirmative answer to the leader of the Quebec Liberal party by postponing his address to the British parliament until he learns how the Supreme Court will rule on this proposal?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I must repeat to the hon. member that I am not questioning the good faith of the provinces. I will state to him the position made publicly by the provinces during the week of September 9. They said: Patriation is out of the question until you accept certain things. Mr. Peckford talked about offshore rights, Mr. Buchanan mentioned federal jurisdiction over fisheries, Mr. Lévesque talked about communications as a whole and sovereignty in this area, and so on. They said this publicly, and we have taken the position that since the provinces are determined to try to extend their powers before giving to the Canadian people what they have wanted for 50 years, namely, a Canadian Constitution, negotiation is impossible.

I would prefer that the hon. member ask supplementary questions if he does not agree with what I say. In this case, this statement was made publicly on television in September, and I know what I am talking about.

● (1430)

[English]

PATRIATION—REPORTED PRESSURE BY CANADA ON UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is also directed to the Prime Minister, who I am sure will be aware that the Secretary of State for External Affairs seriously misled the House last week when he denied that pressures were being brought to bear on the government of Britain by the Government of Canada with respect to getting its constitutional proposals through. I say that in light of the report which appeared in yesterday's edition of the *Edmonton Journal* in which Sir Anthony Ker-shaw, chairman of the select parliamentary committee on foreign and commonwealth affairs, confirmed in a telephone interview that Ottawa is putting extreme pressure on Westminster to rubberstamp the Trudeau formula for patriation of the British North America Act. Who is responsible for this extreme pressure? What does the government feel about the propriety of this act? Why does it feel it has to resort to this kind of tactic?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, it would seem to me that that question should be addressed to Sir Anthony rather than to me. I can state quite clearly that there has been no extreme pressure or no pressure at all. Indeed, I would find it undignified that any member of this—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: If hon. members opposite do not understand the meaning of the word "dignity", I suggest they look it up in their dictionaries.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: I would not want this government to be in the position of begging anything of the United Kingdom. We think it is their duty to respond to a joint address of both Houses of Parliament.

An hon. Member: Blackmail.

Mr. Trudeau: It is as simple as that. That is the way it has happened in the past. They have no more right to look behind an act or resolution passed by this Parliament than the government of any other country would have a right to look behind the composition of some delegation we would want to send to an international meeting.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister may try to refer me to Sir Anthony, but when he denies stories of extreme pressure being brought to bear on British parliamentarians by the Canadian government, indeed he is accusing these people of lying. That is what the question is all about; that is how far he has gone.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Miss MacDonald: There have been statements issued by Sir Anthony which indicate that there are Canadian officials operating in London—

Some hon. Members: Question.

Miss MacDonald: —who are bringing pressures to bear on British parliamentarians. That story is backed up by a number of British members of parliament. It is backed up by George Foulkes, the Labour member for South Ayrshire—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The supplementary question is getting a bit long, and I would ask the hon. member to co-operate with the House by putting her question.

Miss MacDonald: Who are these Canadian officials who are making these threats and giving warnings to British parliamentarians?

An hon. Member: The Peckfords.