

Oral Questions

Is the Prime Minister really just trying to formulate a Canada on a corporate constitution, or what is his plan for a new and revitalized federation?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend seeks to ask the government to be inclusive in regard to parliamentary or para-parliamentary discussions involving people in the constitutional process and then proceeds to denigrate big business, when we have welcomed the participation of big labour in these discussions as well.

My hon. friend should not be hidebound by protectionist and other old tendencies of the NDP over the years. Open your arms, open your minds, open your hearts to business and you will find that they are as constructive and productive as big labour in this country as well. All people should be invited to participate.

My hon. friend says that he is opposed to larger business. We are clearly a minority party in this House, but we believe that the private sector and small, medium and big business, in a proper economic climate, can provide jobs and new wealth for the country. That is the position of this government. We would very much like to have small, medium and large business participate in the constitutional discussions, along with unionized members and the unions themselves.

Surely, if on the one hand my friend is asking for openness and inclusiveness, she should not be excluding anybody in the process.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary of the Prime Minister. That is exactly the point. We do not want to see anyone excluded from the process.

I would ask the Prime Minister if he is prepared to have his offices convene meetings at Meech Lake to discuss with the Business Council on National Issues their constitutional papers? Would he also be prepared to hold similar meetings and serious discussions with aboriginal people, with women, with ethnocultural communities, to discuss those same issues and their views on the constitution and take them equally as seriously in equally as serious a forum?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Prime Minister. I think that is an important message that all of these groups who have felt excluded from the constitution need to hear. I appreciate the Prime Minister's direct response to that question.

I have a supplementary.

[*Translation*]

Last week, in the Budget debate, the Minister of Finance mentioned new tax arrangements. The other day, the Minister of Communications suggested that culture could come under provincial jurisdiction. My question is directed to the Prime Minister. Will he suspend all negotiations which could jeopardize the future of the Constitution until he has received all the committee and commission reports and until an agreement has been reached regarding the constitutional process?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance already answered that some agreements need to be negotiated anyway to ensure the proper operation of the federal government and his relations with the provinces. This is part of our usual business and the Canadian government is fully committed to carry on with this work.

On the subject of the implications of these various issues, I would invite her to take a look at the speech I made in Quebec City on February 13, where, among others things, I said that:

• (1430)

[*English*]

"The Quebec government will soon receive the Bélanger-Campeau Commission report and is now studying the Allaire report. Other provinces have also established mechanisms to review Canada's political framework. There is no doubt in my mind that from these and other task forces we will be able to find the elements of solutions to the problems now facing the country.

Once as many Canadians as possible have had a chance to speak their minds, once any provincial government that so wishes to has stated its position, once the federal government and Parliament have had time to analyse the comments and suggestions put forward, I intend to