

Oral Questions

Mr. Hnatyshyn: In light of that kind of sentiment being expressed, is the Prime Minister intending to communicate with the provinces again to see whether consensus can be obtained in this area, and to review with them the proposal before Parliament, or is he determined to move unilaterally to lead to a situation which Premier Blakeney says is dangerous to the continuance of Canada as it is today?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is suggesting, and I agree with him, that consensus would be better; but he knows consensus has not been achieved over 53 years of efforts by six different prime ministers and dozens and dozens of premiers who have tried to find a way of bringing the constitution back. That consensus has not been found.

● (1430)

I am asked by the hon. member why I do not continue working at it. My reply is very simple. The premiers themselves have not reached any consensus on the best amending formula, and that is why we have provided in the resolution before the House that we would offer the people a choice—

Mr. Clark: That is not what the resolution says, and you know it.

Mr. Trudeau:—either of the Victoria formula, which is the most recent formula in Canada which had the agreement of all 11 provinces—

Mr. Beatty: Eleven provinces?

Mr. Trudeau: Eleven governments. It is the most recent one. It dates back to 1971, and that is why we have put the Victoria formula in as one option. The other option will be an option which the provinces among themselves can agree to present to the Canadian people, and surely if they have one they should be prepared to test it with the Canadian people.

That is why the proposed resolution suggests a referendum to be held between two and four years from now so that the people themselves can decide, not the courts. If Parliament and the legislatures and governments of the provinces cannot agree, then we should not go to the courts to tell us how to do it. We should go to the people so that they can tell us which of the two formulas to use.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: Order. Although this applause might be justified in the views of many—and it has been happening on both sides—it cuts the time of the question period, and there will be fewer members who will be in a position to ask questions.

WAR MEASURES ACT

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON 1970 INVOCATION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, my question concerns an event which was set in motion exactly ten years ago tonight. I refer to the imposition of the War Measures Act to combat what was described by the Prime Minister that day as “an apprehended insurrection” in the province of Quebec. The then justice minister said, and I quote:

It is my hope that some day the full details of the intelligence upon which the government acted can be made public, because until that day comes the people of Canada will not be able to fully appraise the course of action which has been taken by the government.

After a full ten years will the Prime Minister assure us, let us say, within two weeks, that Parliament will be presented with a detailed written explanation of this extraordinary event?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the New Democratic Party refers to something described by me as an apprehended insurrection. I remind him that that was stated only after the government of the province of Quebec and the administration of the city of Montreal had written to the federal government describing the situation as that of apprehended insurrection.

An hon. Member: It was your decision.

Mr. Trudeau: At their request—I might say at their pressing and repeated request after a period of several days; Mr. Bourassa has stated this publicly, and I believe Mayor Drapeau has too—we then took the step—

An hon. Member: You did.

Mr. Trudeau:—of proclaiming the War Measures Act and having certain specific regulations apply only in the province of Quebec. That situation of apprehended insurrection was based on data which are frequently forgotten but which are generally known, and we have nothing to add to the facts which are known publicly.

I believe the Deschenes inquiry in the province of Quebec spent a few years trying to establish facts different from those we said were public and well known. If the government of the province of Quebec had found anything untoward in that action or anything suspicious or hidden, the Leader of the New Democratic Party could be very sure that it would have been made public before or during the referendum. The fact that it was not made public shows that even the most hostilely-inclined provincial government was unable to find any facts or establish any realities contrary to those which are well known and upon which we acted.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, the facts indeed are well known, including studies which were carried out by the present government of the province of Quebec and the one to which the Prime Minister has just referred. According to RCMP officers directly involved, the War Measures Act itself was