

time did not include the recognition of French and English as Canada's two official languages, which was done in 1980, fifteen years ago.

The country has continued to progress, while he is still back in 1980 and we are heading for the 21st century, and he says he has the answer, the magic wand. You wave the magic wand and poof, the studies commissioned by Le Hir vanish into thin air; another wave, and all the risks of separation disappear; another, and the concerns of everyone, from the Prime Minister of Canada to the leaders of other countries, are no more. And then suddenly, another wave and Mr. Parizeau, the leader of the no side, has vanished.

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Clearly short of arguments to defend the federalist cause, Liberal Senator Jacques Hébert, government whip in the Senate, used coarse, derogatory and unacceptable language in describing political scientist Josée Legault as a separatist cow.

Will the Prime Minister publicly dissociate himself from this inappropriate remark by his old friend Jacques Hébert and will he offer an apology, on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada, to the women who have been offended by it?

The Speaker: My dear colleague, the government's administrative responsibilities do not extend to the Senate. I would ask my hon. colleague to rephrase the question, which will perhaps be acceptable.

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, given the unacceptable nature of this remark and the responsibilities of the senator, who was appointed by the Prime Minister to perform official duties, I am asking the Prime Minister whether he will relieve him of his duties.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond.

The Speaker: Just a minute. I will allow the question, and the Prime Minister will be able to answer it.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if this remark was made, I deplore it. That is all I can say. I was not present. I am told it was made in a private conversation. It was not said publicly, but if it was made, I deplore it.

Everyone makes mistakes, perhaps the senator made one here. I have also made mistakes. This senator has faithfully served Parliament and Quebec society. He may have made a mistake—it happens—I regret it.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about deploring a remark, we are talking about dissociating oneself from it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Hubert, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Venne: Thank you Mr. Speaker. This is not a matter of deploring a remark, it is a matter of dissociating oneself from it, and this is what we are asking the Prime Minister to do today. Will he dissociate himself from the remark Senator Hébert made about Ms Legault?

• (1425)

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would much prefer the apology come from Lucien Bouchard for his racist and sexist remarks—

[English]

The Speaker: We do not usually address each other by name in the House in our comments. I find the language is getting a little strong. The hon. member for Macleod.

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HEALTH CARE

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the health minister has failed in her bid to squash semi-private clinics in Canada. Two of the largest provinces just ignore her and four provinces have bluntly said no to decreased medicare funding and no to longer waiting lines.

However, it is never too late to operate co-operatively. We call on the minister to put aside her silly squabbles. We call on her to work with the provinces toward health care reform which puts patients rather than bureaucrats first.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is defending something voted on by the House of Commons, the five principles in the Canada Health Act.

We all agree with her that these principles have to be protected. Unlike the Reform Party, we do not want a two tier system. However, at the same time she has agreed to talk about some specific problems with the provinces in order for them to operate in a way that is completely acceptable according to the principles of medicare. She has the support of this whole party.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wants specifics. Maybe he will listen to the patients on waiting lists throughout the country. The cardiac waiting lists in Canada today are longer than they have ever been in history. Why? They have no choice. The minister offers no choice and no alternative.