

Oral Questions

Secretary of State of Canada and therefore he who must assume full responsibility for that appointment.

I ask the Prime Minister to explain why he has not yet asked the Secretary of State for his resignation since the Secretary of State has not had the courage to hand it in.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the implications raised by this issue will be looked at very closely by the people of Quebec. Quebecers are taking a closer look at the way the Liberal MPs are formulating their questions. The position I have taken on behalf of the federal Government is clear and constitutes an ongoing, coherent policy on the protection of minorities.

The Secretary of State made a few statements on the use of the notwithstanding clause. It is true that the Secretary of State considers the notwithstanding clause to be a key, or vital, means of protection for the Government of Quebec, which is responsible for the protection of the French fact, not only in Canada, but across North America. In my opinion, his position is a legitimate one since the clause was allowed by the previous federal Government.

The position of the Secretary of State is that the clause is vital because Quebec, having been excluded, has not yet been reintegrated. Once the Meech Lake Accord is signed and Quebec integrated in the constitutional fold, Quebec will enjoy the same protection as that enjoyed by other minorities across Canada. In view of this, the Member from Shefford will undoubtedly want to encourage all federal Liberal MPs to actively support all of the provisions contained in the Meech Lake Accord.

POSITION OF SECRETARY OF STATE—GOVERNMENT
POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I have no problem. When there was a vote in this House on the Meech Lake Agreement, I stood up like the great majority of my colleagues and supported the Agreement. But in fact, Mr. Speaker, I hope the Prime Minister does not want to link the two things, because he himself yesterday said there should be no link between Bill 101 and the Meech Lake Agreement. I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether he changed his views since yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Prime Minister how he can accept that his Secretary of State squarely contradicts him, despite the bonds of friendship, all the so-called cabinet solidarity, and why he lets the Secretary

of State try and sing the tune of his pro-PQ wing while he speaks otherwise? What I want to know is this: Is there one truth or is there two truths—one for the Prime Minister and another to suit his Secretary of State?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in 1981—82, after the Constitutional negotiations, Quebec was left out, isolated and humiliated by the then Liberal Government. Since that time, Quebec has been coping with that reality. One of the realities is that in the course of that unfortunate constitutional negotiation, the then Central Government granted provinces the “notwithstanding” clause. Premier Peterson had not asked for it, Premier Bourassa had not asked for it—it was granted by the Government at that point. With Quebec still excluded from the Constitution this Government, with the support of the other Party Leaders, tried to find a formula that would bring Quebec back into the Canadian constitutional fold, that would allow Quebec’s full participation in the Canadian constitutional decision-making process. Once—

An Hon. Member: We supported that.

Mr. Mulroney: Yes, you are right. The Hon. Member supported that. Once it has achieved its goal of cultural security within a united Canada with full participation in the constitutional decisions, there is no doubt, as its Premier indicated, the Province of Quebec will be ready of course to review the “notwithstanding” clause that was granted to it in 1981, because once Canada is unified, with Quebec playing its full role in the Canadian decision-making process, there will be no more need for override provisions such as the clauses that were granted in 1981—1982.

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[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

NEPAL—DETENTION OF CANADIAN CITIZEN

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. About two months ago Mervin Budd of London, Ontario, was arrested in Nepal for preaching Christianity and has been held in prison since that time. Mervin Budd is a prisoner of conscience. He was not smuggling drugs. He did not kill anyone. All he did was express his belief in Christianity.