

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister said yesterday, very clearly, is that any changes in constitutional jurisdictions will only be made with the consent of Quebecers. It seems to me that, as a statement of position by the government, this is very clear.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I think that is a wise commitment and I hope the Prime Minister is prepared to make it to all Canadians.

After the referendum in 1980 we entered into constitutional discussions with a PQ government in Quebec. That proved to be very problematic for the country as a whole and particularly problematic for Quebec.

Does the government believe that the PQ government would be a willing, open and constructive participant in constitutional negotiations?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that after this referendum, in which we hope with all of our hearts that this country will remain united, the premier of Quebec will still be Mr. Parizeau. Since Mr. Parizeau's sole dream and sole obsession has always been to create a separate country, it would perhaps be a little surprising if he were to sit down at a constitutional conference table. May I express the hope that the premier of Quebec will bow to the democratic vote of Quebecers?

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

Clearly, English Canada categorically rejects any possibility of constitutional change in Quebec's favour. This is why the leader of the Reform Party said there was no market for a distinct society, that it was old hat.

Will the Minister of Labour acknowledge that, although the Prime Minister has been saying he wants to enshrine the principle of a distinct society in the constitution, he will be unable to because of the steadfast opposition of English Canada as expressed yesterday by the premiers of British Columbia, Newfoundland and Manitoba?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the words of the Canada's principal leaders are once again being twisted.

What a number of premiers said is that they recognize the principle of a distinct society for Quebec, but wonder whether it was a priority here in Canada at the moment to sit down and change the country's Constitution.

This is what the premiers of the other provinces said. Quebecers are saying exactly the same thing. When asked what the priority should be for their provincial government, how do they respond? Over 80 per cent say it should be the economy, employment, health services or education. Only 8 per cent mention Quebec's political status. So, if we are going to respond to the priorities expressed by our fellow citizens, we must look to the problems before us first and foremost. This is what the premiers confirmed in the other provinces.

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, are we to understand the reason the premiers of English Canada are so steadfastly blocking constitutional change is once again because of the bargaining that went on before the start of the referendum campaign between them and the Prime Minister of Canada in which they promised there would be no constitutional change for Quebec, as the editorial in the *Daily Gleaner* indicates?

Mr. Robichaud: That is disgusting, what she is saying.

• (1440)

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, probably the member for the Bloc Québécois made a mistake when she spoke of our Prime Minister as the prime minister of English Canada. As far as I know, our Prime Minister, a francophone from Shawinigan, is the Prime Minister of all Canadians.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Robillard: And as the Prime Minister of all Canadians, including Quebecers, it is his responsibility to make clear the seriousness of the choice awaiting us on October 30—the destruction of our country, Canada.

I repeat that this is not just any country in the world, it is a country which we are proud of and which we have grown and developed in. I can tell you that everyone who believes in this country will do everything they can so that everybody says no to separation on October 30.

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*[English]***HEALTH**

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Reformers in the provinces want the federal government to respect their jurisdiction in health. The minister has resisted this approach until now.

Will the health minister today commit to respect the provincial jurisdiction in health?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that Canada is the best country in the world is our medicare system.