

Oral Questions

bargain in the best interests of Canada, and we have made it very clear what our position is.

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CITIZENSHIP

Mr. J.W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship.

If ever the spirit of Canadian citizenship was important to our country, it is important now and will become even more critical of value as we work to preserve Canadian unity in the months that lie ahead. Many people say that we lost the meaning of citizenship in Canada, and that the spirit of Canadianism has been missed by many citizens.

My question is this. What steps are we taking to reinforce and strengthen the meaning and the spirit of Canadian citizenship as the over-arching mantle under which the rich potential of our bilingual and multicultural heritage can be pursued? How are we installing the values of citizenship among Canadians, not only new citizens, but all those who have been born here as well?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

It gives me an opportunity to demonstrate the very firm commitment that in the proclamation of the new department and in my responsibilities as the first minister of this new department, that I intend making citizenship, its promotion, its affirmation and its full expression one of the most important and in fact essential activities of this department.

This member has consistently come up with excellent suggestions on how we can better promote understanding among all Canadians. I visited with him in Fredericton on one occasion and saw an initiative that has been ongoing for 20 years.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for

Constitutional Affairs and concerns the government's relationship with aboriginal people.

As he knows, the Assembly of First Nations is meeting this week in Winnipeg and it was to be followed by an event called the People's International Pow Wow. The Department of the Secretary of State has turned down this proposal and I was wondering, given that this sends out a very negative signal to aboriginal people at a time when they are hoping to attract 15,000 people to a pow wow, if the minister would not reconsider this decision on behalf of the government.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I will take a look at it.

I have to say that I had a very constructive meeting the other day with Mr. George Erasmus, who is the outgoing president of the AFN, and I look forward to having similarly constructive meetings with whoever is chosen to take his place, the membership and leadership of that and other aboriginal organizations. I understand very much the importance of participation by non-aboriginals in some of the ceremonial activities of the aboriginal people. I think that is something we all in this House must consider doing more than we have in the past.

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister and it also regards the relationship of this government to aboriginal peoples.

As he probably knows, during the weekend at the initial meetings, the Assembly of First Nations discussed a need for review of Canada's judiciary system. This review has already been started in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta but up to this point the federal government has refused to initiate a review of our judicial system as it relates to aboriginal people.

Would the minister indicate whether or not the government will change its decision on this matter?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I look forward, as do my colleagues, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Minister of Justice, to continuing a series of meetings with aboriginal leaders, including