

*Oral Questions***REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN**

**Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette—Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the last few days, the Bloc Quebecois leader decided to focus his campaign on women. However, the message that he is sending to Quebec women is dubious to say the least.

The Bloc leader said: "Do you think it makes sense that we have so few children in Quebec? We are one of the races of whites with the least children. It doesn't make sense. This means that we have not solved family issues".

This statement by the official opposition leader is totally unacceptable and is also an insult to the freedom of choice which Quebec women have been exercising for years regarding motherhood.

• (1415)

The opposition leader is sadly mistaken if he thinks that, in a separated Quebec, women will readily comply with the demographic demands of the government. Separation will not be achieved on the back of Quebec women. On October 30, they will vote no.

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[Translation]

**REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN**

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in desperation, Daniel Johnson mentioned a commitment made in 1992 by the Liberal Party of Canada to recognize the distinct identity of Quebec, in an attempt to convince himself that the political will for constitutional change exists. However, on September 11 this year, the Prime Minister of Canada told him, and I quote: "Distinct society—we are distinct, no need to put it in the Constitution. When you look at me and hear me speak English, you know I am distinct".

My question is directed to the Prime Minister. I want to ask him whether he intends to remind Mr. Johnson that the federal government has no intention of amending the Constitution to recognize the distinct identity of Quebec, as he himself, the Prime Minister of Canada, said on September 11 this year.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, twice Canadians have been asked to vote on this. I remember the distinct society was part of the Charlottetown accord. I voted for the accord, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition voted against it. The leader of the Bloc Quebecois voted against it. The members of the Parti Quebecois voted against it. Jacques Parizeau did. We were in favour of the accord.

They voted against it, but today they want it back. I think that is a little ridiculous. As we said before, today the issue is not the Constitution. Today we have to answer a question put by the Leader of the Opposition and his former leader, the Premier of Quebec, about whether we should separate.

When asked the question: "Should we separate?", the people of Quebec will say no. Today we are not talking about the Constitution but about answering the question put by the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, so constitutional change is not important enough to discuss at a time when it happens to be the focus of the debate on the future of Quebec. That is rather strange.

The Prime Minister just referred to Charlottetown. He knows perfectly well that the Canada clause made recognition of Quebec's distinct identity devoid of all substance by subordinating this recognition to the fundamental principle of provincial equality.

I want to ask him: Would he confirm that because of the sacrosanct principle of provincial equality, he refuses to recognize Quebec as a distinct society, as he is being asked to do today, alas in vain, by Mr. Johnson who will not learn the lessons of Meech and Charlottetown?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnson voted for the distinct society in the Charlottetown referendum, while the Leader of the Opposition voted against the distinct society when we had a referendum. Mr. Parizeau voted against the distinct society when we had a referendum. Funny how they have changed their minds today. Why did they not consider what they were doing at the time?

They wanted to vote against the accord so they could go on complaining and then have a referendum on separation. We will have one two weeks from today, when people will answer the question on the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada. The people of Quebec know that their future is about remaining full members of the federation of this great country, Canada.

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister voted for Charlottetown, it was because recognition of Quebec's distinct identity did not mean a thing. That is why he voted in favour of the accord and that is why we are going to vote against it.

I want to ask the Prime Minister how he expects Quebecers to trust him after what he did the day after the no in 1980, when he did a job on Quebec by isolating it and imposing a constitution that Quebec still refuses to sign.

• (1420)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about the past. I have nothing to hide. At the time we were, legally speaking, a colony of Great Britain, and we had to patriate the Constitution. We had no Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada, something we wanted to have. The Constitution at the