

*Oral Questions*

delivery of federal government programs. In department after department we have effected that kind of change and we have done it without any constitutional discussion.

• (1430)

The federal government is concentrating on those areas where it can make the maximum impact and is allowing the provincial governments and municipal governments to do the same thing.

The kind of change the leader of the Reform Party calls for is in the process of happening, but it is happening without the kind of rupture and dismantlement the PQ or the Bloc would advocate. It is happening for the betterment of all Canadians.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are offering Quebecers change, real change, not superficial, symbolic constitutional change.

People cannot eat the Constitution. They cannot pay their mortgages with the Constitution. They cannot build their dreams on constitutional clauses.

What is needed today is a changed federal government that respects provincial powers, stops reckless spending and taxation, and gives all provinces the tools they need to develop the strengths of their own communities and economies. That is possible with a no vote.

Is the federal government open to these kinds of changes? Is the Prime Minister open to these kinds of changes? If the government is, how does it propose to demonstrate that openness in practical ways before October 30?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the proof is in the pudding. If we look at what the government has done over the last two years, we see that the fundamental process of change is under way. There is only one thing that can stop the process of change and that is a yes vote, which would make the country go back to square one.

The fact is that a no vote means that the evolution of the country, along with the evolution of the nations around the world, is something that is proceeding apace.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, if you want proof that the federal government is open to change, just look at the remarkable speech the Prime Minister made last night in Verdun.

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#### REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Labour.

When the Prime Minister talks about distinct society, he keeps referring to a concept that is meaningless and subordinate to the principle of equality for all the provinces, a concept that was rejected by Quebecers in the referendum on the Charlottetown accord.

Yesterday, it was impossible to get a specific answer from the Minister of Labour, so we will ask her the same question today. Could the Minister of Labour tell us what kind of distinct society the Prime Minister wants for Quebec, the one in the Charlottetown accord, which is meaningless because it is subordinate to the equality of the provinces or the one in the Meech Lake accord, which the Prime Minister opposed so strenuously?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite simple. I will repeat in this House what the Prime Minister had to say about the meaning of distinct society.

“A Quebec recognized in Canada as a distinct society by virtue of its language, culture and institutions. I have said it before and I say it again: I agree”, the Prime Minister said.

Does the Bloc Quebecois agree with a distinct society?

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said in this House that Clyde Wells was in favour of a distinct society. Are we to understand that when the minister and her Prime Minister talk about distinct society, they are referring to the same definition as Clyde Wells, in other words, a definition that is completely meaningless and without any of the powers demanded by Quebec for more than 30 years?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is such a surprise to see the Bloc Quebecois anxious to defend the concept of distinct society, while their present leader, the leader of the yes side, Mr. Parizeau, says he does not want to hear about distinct society; he says to hell with distinct society. He is just not interested. He is interested in destroying Canada, to make a new country. That is the big difference between the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premier of Quebec.

We want to keep this country called Canada, and we want to remain proud and distinct in Quebec.

• (1435)

[English]

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the Prime Minister's speech last night and other discussions of possible constitutional changes.

Before the Charlottetown accord the Reform Party and the Liberal Party had made commitments that all major constitutional amendments should be done only through national referendum. Is it still the commitment of the Liberal Party that any constitutional changes being planned must be submitted and approved by the people in a national referendum?