

Oral Questions

partnership with Youth Service Canada HRD to develop youth service projects which meet the needs of these aboriginal youth.

This initiative will have a total of 240 participants and will cost approximately \$2 million.

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ROYAL ARMS OF CANADA

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have a rather curious turn of events here today.

Earlier last week the government in introducing this distinct society motion said it attached great importance to symbolism, even symbolic statements.

Now we have a proposed change in the Canadian coat of arms, a Canadian symbol, and the heritage minister who is supposed to be the guardian of these things dismisses it as inconsequential.

To whom does he believe this Canadian symbol belongs, to the sovereign, to the government, to some Liberal backbencher or to the people of Canada?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it certainly belongs to the people of Canada, all of us, but particular to those who believe in what is written on the coat of arms: "To build a better country".

I hope the Reform Party believes in it and will support the new coat of arms.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if it is true what the minister says, that the coat of arms belongs to the people of Canada and he is committed to building a better country, why are the people of Canada not consulted and involved in changes to the Canadian coat of arms?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people responsible for the coat of arms are the people of heraldic authority of Canada under the jurisdiction of the governor general.

That is the way the coat of arms is changed. It has been approved by the Queen. If, as I said earlier, my colleague wants to trigger a nationwide debate on the subject of the change, he would be welcome to it.

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[Translation]

VETO

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice stated that the so-called veto his government is proposing to Quebec in response to the referendum commitments made by the Prime Minister belongs to Quebecers and not to the National Assembly.

• (1455)

My question is directed to the Minister of Justice. Considering what he said yesterday, will the minister confirm that the so-called veto in Bill C-110 does not in any way belong to the government of Quebec or to the National Assembly?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-110 clearly says that before the Canadian government authorizes an amendment to the Constitution, it will need the consent of a majority of the provinces that includes Ontario, Quebec, the Atlantic provinces and the Western provinces. We said clearly in this bill that what we need is the consent of the provinces.

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Justice agree that the wording of Bill C-110 is such that the federal government is free to circumvent the Quebec National Assembly and, for instance, call a federal referendum in Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the important thing to bear in mind is nothing in Bill C-110 changes the formula for amending the Constitution, as set out in part V of the Constitution Act of 1982. What is required under section 38, as the hon. member well knows, is the agreement of seven of the ten provinces expressed by resolutions passed by their legislative assemblies. That is what is required before a constitutional amendment can take place.

All Bill C-110 provides is that before the Canadian government will participate in such a change, and after seven legislative assemblies have expressed their agreement, it will determine the consent of the provinces to the extent of the majority as described in the bill.

What constitutes consent could very well be the legislative assemblies' statement. It could be an expression of support by the government of the province or it could be expressed directly by the people. That flexibility is one of the real advantages of the legislation.

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ROYAL ARMS OF CANADA

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the debate surrounding the change to our flag was one of the most emotional, controversial and moving in Canadian history. It gave all Canadians an opportunity to participate in the development of the symbols of the country.

We are now told our new coat of arms is ready for distribution late this week. How did this happen in such a state of secrecy? I remind the Minister of Canadian Heritage the press release carried an embargo until 10 a.m., December 4, 1995.