

Oral Questions

Hon. Gilles Loiseau (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I may remind the hon. member—I already explained this in the House, I believe yesterday or the day before—that we have tabled a major piece of legislation. This government has tabled an important bill concerning official languages. Since then, it has prepared a very important set of regulations that are still being reviewed by people across Canada and which have now been printed in *The Canada Gazette*.

As for the language of work, I would say the legislation is sufficiently clear to provide a valid framework for efforts in this respect. As far as the government is concerned, we are putting in place a series of protocols to keep improving the quality of these services.

[English]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, that is not the view of the Commissioner of Official Languages and many other Canadians in minority language groups.

My supplementary question is to the Prime Minister. The Commissioner of Official Languages also stated that none of the present commissions on the future of Canada or Quebec have made a precise proposal on the role of bilingualism in a restructured Canada. In this respect, when can we expect a specific policy from the government for the constitutional debate which would fully recognize the linguistic duality of this country?

• (1450)

Will the language minorities continue to be protected by the federal government or will they be forgotten in the constitutional shuffle?

[Translation]

Hon. Gilles Loiseau (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the Commissioner of Official Languages is doing his job. He looked at all sectors and, on the whole, he said he was very satisfied. He drew our attention to a number of points that we could certainly improve, and I think that is clear. But if it is so simple, why didn't the Liberals deal with the problem during the many years they were in power?

[English]

CONSUL GENERAL IN BOSTON

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and it concerns a very serious breach of professional ethics by Canada's Consul General in Boston, former Conservative cabinet minister, Tom McMillan.

As the minister knows, three weeks ago Mr. McMillan wrote to a Prince Edward Island daily attacking Mary Boyd, the head of the Catholic Church Social Action Commission in Charlottetown, for speaking out against Conservative government policies and he urged Islanders to write to the Pope's representative in Ottawa to attack her.

I want to ask the minister this. Will he call in his former colleague, the Consul General, and explain to Mr. McMillan that this conduct is totally unacceptable for a diplomat and will he ensure that McMillan apologizes, not only to Mary Boyd, but to the people of Prince Edward Island and the Catholic Church for this very serious lapse of judgment?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my church, may I thank the hon. member for his help.

May I quote to him the beginning of the letter from the Consul General of Canada, where he said: "Your Excellency, I am not writing to you either as Canada's Consul General to New England or as a former politician. Instead, I am writing as a concerned Roman Catholic"

I will not go on to read the rest, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, the minister unfortunately is confused. The letter in question is not the letter he quoted from, which is a private letter. The letter in question is a public letter, published in a Prince Edward Island newspaper.

I want to ask the minister: In light of that fact, and in light of the criticism by Dean Thomas Maybe, fellow Catholic of the Atlantic School of Theology, who said: "The letter displays ignorance of Catholic teaching and insensitivity to proper relations between church and state", will the minister not recognize that it is fundamentally wrong for—