

government, your constitutional authority and establish a corridor through Quebec so that Newfoundland's hydroelectric power can be transmitted to markets in New York? The minister has refused to grant that up to now, and he knows it.

**Mr. Chrétien:** Madam Speaker, we said we are willing to do for Newfoundland what we have done for any other province wanting to export natural gas, oil and so on to any other province using our federal power. In a letter signed by the Prime Minister of Canada to Mr. Peckford we said that we want to do that when there is a real contract and a real need. We all recognize it would be better for Mr. Peckford to try to make a deal with Mr. Lévesque, they are so friendly these days, but I am pleased to see that the premier and the hon. member know that we need a strong federal government to protect the interests of Newfoundland.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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### THE CONSTITUTION

#### QUERY RESPECTING TELEGRAM FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA ECCLESIASTICS

**Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. The minister has received a telegram from the archbishop's office of the Archdiocese of Vancouver signed by all the bishops of British Columbia and the Yukon. It points out that the present proposed charter focuses almost exclusively on the rights of the individual as an existential entity and very imperfectly recognizes groups in relation to society. One sentence from the telegram reads:

In our opinion the imbalance between individual and collective rights in the proposed Canadian charter poses a threat to many groups and societies including the church and church related societies such as schools, hospitals and social agencies.

Does the minister share these concerns expressed by the archdiocese in British Columbia? If so, is he willing to stake his reputation, without qualification, on the statements he made in committee on this subject that the charter would protect group rights, such as churches, independent schools, hospitals and social agencies?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development):** Madam Speaker, these questions were answered in committee dozens of times. The Canadian charter guarantees rights and freedoms, but it also protects group rights. We made sure that the rights entrenched in the Constitution, for example, in some provinces the right to have confessional schools, will be well protected. We have also recognized in the Constitution the principle of multiculturalism in Canada. We have recognized the collective rights of the Indian people. I think that during the proceedings of the committee the three parties gave their unanimous approval to

### Oral Questions

each of those items. We have maintained a very good balance between individual and collective rights.

[English]

#### QUERY WHETHER CHARTER OF RIGHTS COVERS UNBORN CHILDREN

**Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton South):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice, to whom I sent notice, because I think all members in the House will be interested in the precision of his answer.

In the proposed charter of rights, Section 7 reads:

Everyone has the right to life—

Section 15 reads:

Every individual is equal before and under the law—

Could the minister clarify the meaning of those two sections with respect to the abortion question? When the government uses the words "everyone" and "every individual", does the government include the unborn child? Will the government take steps to ensure there is no ambiguity concerning constitutional protection for the rights of the unborn child?

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development):** Madam Speaker, we dealt with that problem extensively in the committee. I hope the hon. member read the committee's report. We said that the question of abortion in Canada will not be affected by the charter of rights, that the question of abortion will be dealt with, as it has been in the past, through the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code has a provision about it. It is clear, and it is enforced by the provinces. The situation will remain the same. We do not intend to change the legal situation in Canada with regard to abortion. It will remain as it is now.

● (1140)

#### REPRESENTATIONS WITH RESPECT TO STATUS OF WOMEN

**Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam):** Madam Speaker, I wish to direct my first question to the Minister of Justice. The minister has been meeting with representatives of the ad hoc committee on women and the Constitution as a result of their conference in Ottawa last weekend which was so successful. Has the minister given serious consideration to some of the improvements they would like to see made in the charter, for example, the use of the word "person" where "individual" is now used? Will he advise which particular improvements or additions it might be possible to introduce in the charter?

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development):** Madam Speaker, following the representations made by the different women's groups at the committee stage, Clause 15 was amended to meet some of these requirements. They made other suggestions. As we are now in the final stage, the possibility of any change is not great. Some aspects were dealt with in committee and some of those were disposed of by the committee. We have already met many of these points but, as I told them, we will see whether it is