

## Oral Questions

short memory, Mr. Speaker. Since I did not get any answer from the Prime Minister, I will try for a more specific one.

• (1420)

In the document tabled, we read that "the Government of Quebec must—be a willing party to any change in its relationship with the federal government. This is the spirit of the federalism we believe in". This is the no position.

Does the Prime Minister agree with this statement of the no side's position, a statement which calls for a veto for Quebec? Does he agree?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my party supported a veto for Quebec. When René Lévesque was Premier of Quebec and he met with the seven other premiers, he was the one who opted for an amending formula that gave all the provinces equal status. He rejected the Victoria formula, which provided for a veto and which was proposed by this government to combine with the others and create equality among the provinces.

It was at this point that the veto we were proposing for Quebec was dropped by the PQ, which the member belonged to at the time. Instead of criticizing us for the situation, he should do a *mea culpa*. For strictly partisan and short term reasons, Mr. Lévesque dropped the veto for Quebec.

**Mr. Gilles Ducesse (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, René Lévesque made a single mistake: going to Ottawa without a mandate and trusting the premiers of the other provinces and the current Prime Minister, all of whom betrayed him. Never again will we make the same mistake.

In a brochure sent to all Quebecers by the director general of elections in Quebec, the no committee clearly demands a right of veto for Quebec, and since members asked the question, I will quote from the brochure once again to give them another chance of hearing it: "The government of Quebec must be a willing party to any change in its relationship with the federal government". This is what the no side and the Prime Minister are currently selling Quebecers.

As an eminent member of the no committee, can the Prime Minister tell us if he was consulted on the demand for a right of veto as expressed, printed and conveyed by the no side? Is this what he is saying or is he telling us stories once again?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the constitutional position of the Liberal Party of Quebec is well-known. It was developed by the Liberal Party of Quebec. For us, the question at this time is about the right of veto. We offered Quebec a right of veto before, but René Lévesque turned it down in favour of another amending formula.

When Mr. Johnson forms the new government after the next election, he will be able to make the same demand if he wants to and it will be submitted to the provinces. If the provinces agree, the amending formula will be changed.

As for myself, if I was in favour of this amending formula in 1970, I will have no difficulty in approving it again. The Parti Québécois, however, has created a situation that will make it very difficult to find a solution because they were the ones who rejected the right of veto. It was rejected not by us but by them so they could join forces with the other provinces in opposing the proposals made by the government of which I was then a member. I have nothing to learn from them. If a mistake was made, it is the Parti Québécois that must pay the price. They were the ones who rejected Quebec's right of veto.

**Mr. Gilles Ducesse (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I say again to the Prime Minister that Lévesque's mistake was to trust the premiers of the other provinces, who betrayed him with the assistance of the current Prime Minister, an expert manipulator. We know that he has nothing to learn in the area of manipulation. He is Canada's number one manipulator.

I ask the Prime Minister to give us a straightforward answer. There is a clear statement from the no committee, of which he is a member. Until he tells us that he is no longer on the committee, he is still on it. His Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and his Minister of Labour, who is responsible for the referendum, are also on this committee. Do they agree with what is in this brochure? This is a simple question. It is not hard to answer. Could he make an effort, Mr. Speaker?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the truth hurts when we tell them that they were the ones who rejected Quebec's right of veto. They have no right to blame us at this time.

The truth is that they want to talk about something else. They do not want to talk about their plans. For five weeks and even five months they have tried telling Quebecers: "We do not want to separate, we want a partnership". They are now changing their tune at the last minute.

Their document clearly states that they want to keep their Canadian citizenship and passports. And then yesterday, with a wave of their magic wand, the Canadian passport became something else for Quebecers. They have changed their tune. We, however, are not changing our position. We want Quebec to stay in Canada and we are not flip-flopping as the Bloc members are doing because the PQ is suddenly changing its tune while still trying to hide the truth from Quebecers. These separatists do not have the courage to frankly tell Quebecers that they are indeed separatists.