

Oral Questions

As a matter of fact, in the Conservative caucus we have a committee on constitutional issues which is devoting a lot of time to considering these issues.

You do not need the government to organize for the opposition that it should form caucus committees or whatever to consider these issues. The process at the present time is that we are attempting to get the views of the Canadian people through the Spicer commission. We have our own Commons-Senate committee on the process of amending the Constitution. We have six or eight provincial inquiries under way.

When the Prime Minister and the government feel the time is right, we will make a decision as to what the next step should be. In the meantime we are doing our homework and we hope that other members will as well.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I think the time is right now to deal with both process and content of constitutional change.

In light of the fact that some \$8 million has been allocated for the national unity task force in the next year, could the Acting Prime Minister tell the House whether any of this money has been spent or will be spent on special interest groups to study national unity, groups such as the Business Council on National Issues, the Chamber of Commerce, or any other groups? Has money been spent or has it been allocated to those groups on that important issue?

• (1450)

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the money involved that the hon. member is referring to is to be used by the government in order to prepare and to study all of the options that should be looked at in connection with possible future constitutional arrangements in Canada. It would include meeting the expenses of constitutional experts and people with experience who are called upon.

I cannot tell him here today as to how much has been spent to date or on what particular subject. This is the kind of use that this funding will be put to.

When we have seen what the full range of views of the Canadian public is and when we have seen this year what are the considered views of the various bodies organized by the provinces that are looking at this question, the Government of Canada will come forward with what it

thinks is a solution to these problems. We will then invite a debate not just in this House—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Nepean.

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CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

In May 1990 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the convention on the rights of the child. On September, after adoption by 20 nations, it entered into force. Canada was not one of those 20 nations.

In spite of what the finance minister says, this government has cut millions of dollars from health care and education budgets, areas where the United Nations convention outlines minimum standards.

Could the Acting Prime Minister explain when Canada will ratify its commitment to this agreement and what measures will be taken to ensure that Canada is able to live up to the terms of this convention on the rights of the child?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that the Prime Minister is very concerned with the rights of children in this country. That is why he chaired the summit last year at the United Nations.

My colleague from the opposition has many premises in the question, one of them being that our social programs are in danger. She should know that 35 cents of every dollar goes to pay for the debt.

The best way that we can take care of the children of this country and the health programs of this country is with the budget the Minister of Finance has introduced. That is how we will do it. That is how we will succeed.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister were really serious about the convention on the rights of the child, why has Canada not ratified our agreement?

Surely, the Acting Prime Minister will realize that because of the division of powers between the provinces and the federal government, the only mechanism that he