

Oral Questions

Imagine rising and talking this way. As far as the distinct society is concerned, in Charlottetown, we voted for it.

[English]

• (1125)

We campaigned for a distinct society, like Ms. Frulla-Hébert. Yes. It was the PQ, Mr. Parizeau and Mr. Bouchard and all of you, who once again scuttled that, because you want separation and anything goes in the name of separation, except telling Quebecers the truth.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the distinct society the Prime Minister is talking about is not the one in the original Meech Lake accord, it is the one in the Charest report "à la" Clyde Wells. Thank you Clyde, we remember the emotional outpourings on television. As for the original Meech Lake accord, the Prime Minister fought his whole leadership campaign against it, and he won. The Minister of Finance, on the other hand, campaigned for the Meech Lake accord and lost because of it. This is what history teaches us.

We must get back to Ms. Frulla, who made another statement this morning. She said that, in the case of culture, what was upsetting was the federal government's power to spend according to its own priorities. She went on to say that the federal government had to get out of the field and give the money to Quebecers to administer themselves. Her remarks were clear.

Does the Prime Minister agree with his deputy chairman, Ms. Frulla, and does he intend to withdraw completely from the field of culture, with full financial compensation, as his deputy chair wants him to?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a distortion of history, again. We were talking about the Meech Lake accord; the PQ was opposed. You were against it. Why are you criticizing us for siding with you at the time?

An hon. member: You were against it.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Yes, but so were you.

I said at the time that it was not satisfactory, and you did not find it satisfactory either. Then, after we made the necessary changes and it became Charlottetown, I was in favour, and you were still opposed. So you have always been in favour of Quebec developing within Canada? This is where your problem lies. We, on the other hand, want Quebec to develop inside Canada. And when you talk about culture, there was a proposal in Charlottetown, and you voted against it. So shame on you, you are always opposed. Quebecers will be in favour of staying in Canada on October 30, in two weeks' time.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday afternoon the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated in Washington that "Canada will contribute to any U.S. led NATO force in the former Yugoslavia".

Later the Minister of National Defence confirmed this commitment saying: "It will not be a peacekeeping role. It will be more of a protective force and therefore have a combat capability".

Yesterday, however, the Prime Minister and the government tried to backtrack saying Canada's participation is yet to be determined. But this does not alter the fact that American officials took these statements as a definite support for their plans.

What was promised to the American government? Will we be sending troops? More important, why was Parliament not consulted?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ongoing initiative at this time to have a permanent peace situation in Bosnia should be welcomed by everybody. At long last the Americans seem to be willing. I am not sure if they will be able to send some troops but the president says that he will send 25,000 soldiers there.

I was talking a few days ago with the Prime Minister of Great Britain who told me that he would send some soldiers there. I talked with the President of France who said that he would send soldiers there. I said that we would consider being there.

I said in the House that before we made the final decision there would be a debate in the House of Commons. We have to talk with them first to know what they want, what kind of role, and nothing has been determined yet. We will come to the House of Commons. It is the first time in the history of Parliament that we have had a debate before a final decision of this kind.

We have the right to talk with the people who are asking us to be there. We cannot do it in a vacuum. Probably there will be another flip flop. For months they all supported the presence of troops in Bosnia. However, yesterday they said they did not vote for it. They supported it all along at a time when they were trying to score political points. They are now gauging the wind, and it would not surprise me if they flip flopped again.

• (1130)

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about consultation before commitment.

The Liberals have long forgotten their red book promises. They promised to reject the camp follower approach to the U.S.