

Oral Questions

position on whether he made a definite commitment, we will act accordingly.

• (1455)

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, my question to the government is quite clear and it is this: Yesterday, the Prime Minister knew, because his predecessor had told him before Question Period, that he had made a commitment to submit Quebec's request to the government. I would like to know why yesterday in this House, the Prime Minister did not share that information with Parliament and why instead, he insinuated there had been some unlawful activity?

[English]

The Speaker: This question is, if I understand it, directly posed to the Prime Minister who is not in the Chamber at this time.

Is it to the Deputy Prime Minister?

[Translation]

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made no insinuations whatsoever. Today, the only insinuation has come from the hon. member for Sherbrooke. Now, the Prime Minister is waiting for a letter from Brian Mulroney because a lot is said on the telephone. We want to see the truth in writing, and that is what we are waiting for. The Prime Minister said that as soon as he sees a commitment by the federal government in writing, he will act on that commitment. That is exactly what he said yesterday in the House.

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[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Tony Ianno (Trinity—Spadina): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Some Canadians have the wrong impression that immigrants take jobs and abuse our social security system. I have serious concerns about the growing backlash against immigrants and refugees.

What is the minister doing to address these concerns and to inform the Canadian public about the real and positive contributions that immigrants do make to Canadian society?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the question which is a good question, because sometimes we allow mythology to wrap itself around this policy we call immigration. Rather than point to government, we should perhaps look at the study that was released by the Clarke

Institute this week, a study of 1,300 former Vietnamese boat people spanning some 10 years.

It found individuals who were a tremendous success story. One out of every five started a business; 99 per cent of them became Canadian citizens; 7.3 per cent used the social system rather than the 10 per cent of the rest of Canadians.

What this paints is a distinction between fact and fiction. Hopefully that lesson is not lost on these customers who continue to spin mythology around immigration.

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[Translation]

1992 REFERENDUM

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Prime Minister was supposed to be in the House today. That is the information we were given. However, at the beginning of the sitting, we were advised he would be late and, with your consent, we agreed to wait with our questions. Since he is not here, I will have to put a question to the Deputy Prime Minister, following the answer she gave the hon. member for Sherbrooke. I realize we do not have enough time, so I will ask only one question. But do not worry, we will get you next time around!

• (1500)

Am I to understand from the Deputy Prime Minister's reply to a question from the hon. member for Sherbrooke that the Prime Minister was aware, as a result of a telephone conversation he had with Mr. Mulroney, that the latter had promised to treat Quebec equitably and compensate it for its referendum expenses, and that the Prime Minister will not take Mr. Mulroney, who is an honourable man, at his word and wants to see this confirmed in writing?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister spoke to Mr. Mulroney, they agreed that Mr. Mulroney would send him a reply in writing, stating his position on the existence of an agreement between the Government of Quebec and the federal government.

That is what the Prime Minister stated in the House, and the situation has not changed.

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[English]

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: Colleagues, I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Ali Hassan Mwinyi, President of the United Republic of Tanzania.