

Oral Questions

[Translation]

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, since its birth in 1867, Canada has experienced a number of problems. There are problems today, and there will certainly be other problems in the future. Canada's anglophones and francophones have not always shared nor will they always share the same vision of this country we call Canada.

[English]

But, over-reacting to all our constitutional problems does not help Canada, does not help Quebec or any other province. Despite all the historical difficulties this country has experienced in the past, all members of this House on both sides of the issue must remember that Canada is still a wonderful place to live, to bring up a family and to build a better future for our children.

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COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, the people of the Six Nations have gone through a number of environmental crises over the last few weeks: asbestos found in their schools, contamination in their drinking water, air contamination resulting from the Hagersville fire.

All this time the community newspaper, known as *The Tekawennake* has enabled the people of the Six Nations to keep informed of these issues.

In the last budget the Secretary of State has cut funding for these community newspapers, and I call upon him to reconsider his decision to make these cuts in order to help these community newspapers keep open the lines of communication that are much needed on the reserves.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister. In light of the

growing concern as to what is happening in this country on the matter of constitutional change, exactly what is the Prime Minister doing in a positive way at this time to bring about constitutional change of a kind that is broadly acceptable to Canadians generally?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Senator who is the Minister of Federal-Provincial Affairs, and other ministers have been in ongoing discussions and consultations with the premiers and other officials of the provinces in an attempt to draw together a better degree of consensus and understanding so that there may be some basis for advancing this particular issue.

I am sure the hon. member is referring specifically to what occurred in the legislature in Newfoundland yesterday, and the notice of the intention of the government of Newfoundland to revoke the resolution that was previously passed.

I should remind my hon. friend that the Prime Minister and indeed all first ministers had given the Premier of Newfoundland an undertaking that the Meech Lake Accord or any variation of it would not be implemented until the legislature in the province of Newfoundland would have an opportunity to reconsider the matter and express its approval or its disapproval. In return the Premier of Newfoundland had agreed that the legislature would not in the meantime rescind the resolution that has already been passed in the legislature of Newfoundland. We can only expect that commitment to be upheld and honoured.

While it is included in the Speech from the Throne, there has not been any specific date as to when it may be rescinded. Therefore I think that it offers the opportunity for further discussions and consultations to continue.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have been talking about the mood in the country generally. In light of what the Deputy Prime Minister has just said I want to ask him if the Prime Minister will call an immediate first ministers' conference on this very important matter?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the good intentions of my hon. friend I am not sure the word "immediate" would be appropriate, inasmuch as I think