

Senator de Cotret: I will be happy to bring more detailed information to the Senate at a later date, but I can certainly say, firstly, that there is no preferential treatment being given or to be given to any offshore supplier. Secondly, to underline my first point, one of the first things that we did upon taking office was to extend the period of the bids in order to allow Canadian interests to put in their bids because the manner in which the bidding had been structured in the past, by persons unknown, was such that only foreign bids had been received. We extended the bid period to make sure that we could treat this whole question in an equitable manner.

The question is still under active negotiation, and I would be happy to give any further details to this chamber as soon as I receive them.

Senator Perrault: I thank the minister for the information he has given, and I would welcome any further information indicating that there will be a full and fair opportunity given to Canadian firms to bid on this contract.

As the minister is aware, there is a great deal of unemployment in the Canadian shipyard industry. The industry needs this contract. This is a matter of real importance to the working people and to the economy of the west coast.

[Translation]

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT

LANGUAGE RIGHTS—JUDGMENT OF THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

Senator Marchand: Honourable senators, I am informed that the Supreme Court of Canada rendered this morning an historic decision on the appeal placed before it, finding as it did that certain basic provisions in Quebec's Bill 101 are unconstitutional, and dealing also with the decision taken some 100 years ago by the then Manitoba government to withdraw language rights from its French-speaking minority. Honourable senators, this certainly is an historic decision, but there seems to be an attempt to hide the fact that this decision could have far reaching implications not only in Quebec but throughout Canada.

Under the circumstances, could the government leader indicate whether the Prime Minister intends to call as soon as possible a conference of first ministers to examine the implications of that decision by the Supreme Court?

It should not be forgotten that the Supreme Court's decision means that francophones in Manitoba have been deprived of their statutory rights for more than 90 years.

There is also Bill 101. Quebecers are proud of the results of that bill, but they are less than proud of what it took away from the English-speaking minority. At this historic juncture, should the Prime Minister not call the provincial premiers together and ensure that those fights for the rights of Canada's two principal languages, for more linguistic justice throughout Canada, be pursued rather than curtailed?

Senator Flynn: Honourable senators, I agree with Senator Marchand that those two decisions rendered this morning by

[Senator Perrault.]

the Supreme Court of Canada, on Quebec's Bill 101 and on the *Forest* case in Manitoba, are of the utmost significance.

As far as the emergency meeting suggested by Senator Marchand is concerned, I am not sure this is the best course of action at this point. My department and are studying the implications of those two judgments of course. Those two judgments, concerning mainly two provinces, Quebec and Manitoba—I believe the immediate problem affects those two provincial governments—can have general implications, providing those two provinces act accordingly. I cannot see how the emergency meeting suggested by Senator Marchand could be beneficial. Only if these judgments were not complied with would the federal government step in, with possible implications that cannot yet be determined. Then the Canadian government could arrange the suggested meeting or take any other action deemed fit, but I do not believe that any hasty action is warranted at this point. We must first see what the provinces will do before we can decide on a course of action, if one should be needed.

● (1440)

Senator Marchand: A supplementary question, honourable senators. I think that the Leader of the Government gets off a little too easily when he says that it is the business of Quebec and Manitoba. It concerns the Canadian Constitution, and one of the essential sections, of the Canadian Constitution is section 133. So the federal government should not say of the referendum, "Well, we will let them act and see the results". I find that it is a very cool attitude, which may be a quality of this government. I would say that it is not keeping abreast with the Canadian people.

You must, no doubt, know Montreal as I do. There is the response of the anglophone groups, just as there is the response of francophones in Manitoba. Since it is the basic Canadian legislation, I do not understand how the Leader of the Government can adopt such a disinterested attitude and say, "Well, we will see what they do and then we will decide."

Senator Flynn: I do not see why Senator Marchand is getting excited. He refers to the attitude of the government. I would not, under those circumstances, tell him about labour's attitude. I am saying that the decisions of the Supreme Court have confirmed section 133 of the British North America Act. If the two governments involved comply with the decision, there is no problem.

It is only in the event that the provinces involved do not comply with the provisions of the judgment that the problem would arise. On the contrary, I think that Senator Marchand should say that they are good judgments. They acknowledge the validity of section 133. I hope everybody will admit it and not become excited but realize that it is a valid and very effective decision in our national interest.

Senator Marchand: A last supplementary question. I am probably too nervous, but I am afraid that the Leader of the Government does not realize that I am not the only one who is nervous following the decision of the Supreme Court.