

Adjournment Debate

ment's. If that were not the case, I would really like to know why she would waste her time reading and studying the public statements made by the Premier of Quebec on various subjects relating to foreign affairs.

However, this partisan stand of the Deputy Prime Minister clearly shows the Canadian government's insensitivity to the fate of Mr. Tran, a Quebecer held prisoner in Vietnam.

[English]

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want the hon. member to know that this government is not at all insensitive to the situation of Mr. Quan. He might be happy to know that the Prime Minister raised the matter of Mr. Quan's continuing detention during his meeting in Hanoi with the Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet.

The Prime Minister received a full explanation of the details of the case and was assured that the matter would be handled fairly and in accordance with Vietnamese law.

Mr. Quan has both Canadian and Vietnamese citizenships. Vietnamese authorities, however, do not recognize dual nationality and deny access to Mr. Quan by Canadian officials.

However, as a result of repeated high level interventions from the Canadian government we have gained counsellor access to Mr. Quan. Canadian officials have visited Mr. Quan and confirmed he is not being mistreated.

This is a very complex case in which a Vietnamese corporation lost a considerable sum of money. We understand that the Vietnamese are investigating the possibility of fraud.

As part of its regular counsellor assistance Canadian officials are facilitating discussions between Mr. Quan and Vietnamese authorities with regard to the possibility of Mr. Quan's release. These discussions are private and confidential and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on them here.

The Canadian government will continue to provide all appropriate counsellor assistance to Mr. Quan and will monitor the situation with vigilance. It would not be appropriate for the Canadian government to demand that the Vietnamese set aside their own legal procedures and immediately release Mr. Quan, nor would it be appropriate for the government to support a business boycott of Vietnam because one of its citizens is being held in connection with a criminal investigation.

We have the right to insist upon counsellor access and due process. We are and will continue to do both.

[Translation]

DRAFT BILL ON QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, On December 9, I rose in this House to ask the Prime Minister about the referendum process in Quebec. The Bloc Quebecois wanted to know, and still wants to know, if the Prime Minister stands by what he wrote in his autobiography where he said: "If we lose the referendum, we will respect Quebecers' wishes and accept separation".

The Prime Minister answered my question by saying, first of all, that he wanted a clear question, adding that he would not answer any hypothetical question. The Prime Minister should realize that he is inconsistent in his statements. By not clarifying his stand on wishes democratically expressed by Quebecers, the Prime Minister is refusing to give an opinion on the right of the Quebec people to decide their future.

• (1700)

Before being sovereignists or federalists, we must all be democrats. I dare hope that nobody wants to make Quebec an independent country or to maintain it within the Canadian federation against Quebecers' will.

Moreover, the Prime Minister would do well by following the lead of his colleagues, the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine and the hon. member for Mount Royal, both of whom recently recognized that it is up to Quebecers to decide their future. The Prime Minister has shown partisan behaviour instead of political responsibility during Question Period last Friday. It is urgent that he display an attitude appropriate to his important responsibilities as a head of state.

Besides, during the same debate last week, the Prime Minister wrongly accused sovereignists of hiding their option by using a question referring to a draft bill containing 1,600 words. He said that many federalists were refusing to participate in those consultations because of this little trick. Those were terrible and very inconsiderate remarks.

Should we remind him of the consultations which surrounded the Charlottetown Agreement? Should we remind him that the Charlottetown Agreement contained not 1,600 words but well over 10,000 words? Yes, 10,000 words. The Prime Minister and his party were not at all shocked. On the contrary, they promoted the content of that agreement all across Canada.

You must admit that the qualms the Prime Minister has today are quite recent and his rationale seems one-sided. The federal government and its Quebec branch have to talk about the real options. Let them remind us that they have nothing else to offer but the status quo.