

Oral Questions

This morning one of our planes was hit by three shots but no damage was done. The plane is being repaired in Nairobi. It had a BBC reporter on board.

I want to underline the fact that this is a very dangerous theatre of conflict. Whatever we decide to do in terms of incremental action has to be thought through very considerably.

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[*Translation*]

TAXATION SYSTEM

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the ruling by the Federal Court of Appeal on the taxation of child-support payments has reopened the debate on the inequities of the taxation system for families. The ruling said that the Income Tax Act was discriminatory, because it treated differently divorced parents and other individuals in similar circumstances.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Does she agree that we should review all the fiscal measures dealing with child support and custody?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, clearly we recognize the inequities of the present taxation system. This is why, in a large part at the request of the women's caucus of the Liberal Party, the Minister of Finance started a discussion of this in his budget.

It is equally obvious that this court ruling will have a very direct impact on the income of many families. We are studying the direct implications, and the Minister of Justice as well as the Minister of Finance indicated yesterday that we can expect a decision on this in the very near future.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Deputy Prime Minister. Does she not agree that this ruling and its consequences show the need to proceed without further delay to an in-depth reform of the whole taxation system, a system which should be based on equity, fairness and the absence of loopholes?

[*English*]

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that the Minister of Finance recognized and understood the inequities in the tax system when in the budget he launched a process to review this very provision. In fact, he was encouraged to do so not only by the private member's bill launched by the member for Nepean, but also by the strong presentations he received from the membership of the women's caucus of the Liberal Party.

I can assure the hon. member that the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice and all members of the government are going to be working very hard to make sure that present inequities in the tax system are eliminated.

ABORIGINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

I am sure that the minister will agree that the establishment of any genuine democratic government must rest on the consent of the governed. The minister has told the House that he is proceeding with the establishment of aboriginal self-government in Manitoba and that he has obtained the consent of the chiefs.

Would the minister tell the House clearly and explicitly whether he also intends to seek the consent of the aboriginal people of Manitoba for this new form of government?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if my friend is suggesting another referendum but I think he is.

Probably in the long run this is going to depend a lot on how the aboriginal people govern themselves. The way they govern themselves now is to always go back to the people. They go back to the people much more than we do. They have more self-government now. I see some of the hon. members nodding. Anybody who has done aboriginal work realizes that they are consulting all the time.

A short answer to the question is that there probably will be referendums at the band level if they go along on the same basis they are now.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his reply. He knows that sometimes leaders will agree to constitutional arrangements which the people will not approve if they get a chance to vote, as in the case of the Charlottetown accord.

• (1425)

Will the minister tell the House what would be wrong with seeking the democratic consent of all the aboriginal people of Manitoba to this new form of government through a formal referendum mechanism?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the leader of the Reform Party, the way it looks like it is playing out now is that the leadership after consultation with the membership has decided on dismantling, to take it subject matter by subject matter starting with capital, forestry and so on.

At some point they will take back what they think is an appropriate self-government arrangement to their people. I am hopeful that if the leadership is wise and does the job wisely, as perhaps we have not done on our side in the past, that the people will ratify the agreements.