

Food and Drugs Act and the cannabis offences. When the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) made some statements that made the headlines about this situation, many people were concerned that the government wanted to legalize cannabis and therefore wanted Canadians to use this drug. I believe it is important for me to state clearly to this House, to the constituents of Lotbinière and to the Canadian people as a whole that the government of Canada has no such intention. Rather, the government wants to restrict the penalties provided under the law, especially with regard to simple possession of this drug. It is often said that we profit by our mistakes. If a youth makes a mistake in this area, and if he is given, as an example of drug traffic, only a few ounces or a gram of this drug, he can be imprisoned for a minimum of seven years. Should a 20-year old Canadian who has had an unfortunate experience in this area automatically be imprisoned for seven years?

It is mostly this situation that the Minister of Justice dealt with when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, and many people, perhaps mostly police officers, have been saying: "This problem is serious and the government wants to legalize it." This is not true, Mr. Speaker, because as I said earlier, the government only wants to simplify the situation and lighten the sentences for simple possession of this drug. I feel this is quite important. Many jurists and lawyers have stated before the courts that the law should be changed, and I believe it is because the government of Canada has listened to them that it wants to bring amendments before this House. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne also mentions Canadian unity. When the Speech from the Throne was read by His Excellency the Governor General, Mr. Schreyer, on April 14, the next day, as everyone will recall, Mr. Speaker, the government of Quebec launched its referendum campaign.

In the Speech from the Throne, on April 14, we were told:

That is why my government hopes that the referendum, to be held in Quebec sometime during the coming weeks, will be a time when Quebecers affirm their will and their right to be fully Canadian, a time when all Canadians will reaffirm their desire to live together in the country to which we all belong, and which belongs to all of us.

Because my government wants to strengthen the spirit of Canadian unity and nurture the seeds of renewal, it promises to interpret a vote of No to sovereignty-association as a vote for the rebuilding of the Canadian federation. My government also promises to give effect to a No vote by mobilizing all the forces at its command in order to ensure the renewal of the federation in a spirit of respect and justice for all.

Mr. Speaker, today, everybody knows, of course, that on May 20, 1980, Quebecers said no to sovereignty-association and yes to Canada. They said yes to Canada because they believed that they would find security in Canada and something basic. The empty words of Quebec politicians who supported sovereignty told us that we had nothing to lose, that we are going to negotiate. They did not say exactly what was implied in sovereignty-association. Quebecers made their choice. They said no to that insecurity and uncertainty. So, they said yes to Canada and to a renewed Canadian federa-

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tion. In that regard, in terms of renewing our Canadian federation, considerable progress has already been made. Just after the referendum, the right hon. Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) invited provincial premiers here in Ottawa, and on June 9, a meeting was held at which a few statements of principle were issued, some points raised for future discussion; more recently, the minister in charge of federal-provincial relations, the Minister of Justice and Minister of State in charge of Social Development (Mr. Chrétien) met his counterparts in Montreal. This week he is in Toronto; next week he will be in Vancouver.

● (1500)

Quebeckers were right, then, in saying Yes to a renewed federation, because that renewal was launched immediately in an effort to show Quebecers that their vote in support of federalism was not just wishful thinking, and that the Quebec MPs, the 74 and even the 75 who said no to that travel into the unknown bid by the PQ government, wanted quick action. And I submit rapid progress has been made to date. Even in today's newspapers, as in days past, we see discussions are going on between provincial ministers in charge of federal-provincial relations and the federal minister, Mr. Chrétien. A consensus is sought on many points and already some aspects have been referred to a committee of officials, such as family law, communications, fisheries, and a statement of principles. So, in a very short time, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government, the Liberal administration, here in Ottawa has proved to Quebecers and Canadians that they want to renew the confederation and want to keep the promise they made, the one hon. members from Quebec made, to work diligently to that end.

Of course, in respect of this whole issue, I referred briefly to it when speaking on federal programs. I think members of this House must, even now, draw the attention of Quebecers and Canadians to existing programs at the federal level and show what the implications are of the federal government as far as provinces are concerned. How many Quebecers, how many Canadians have hon. members met who were surprised to hear about the federal government's participation or to learn that such and such a Canadian program existed!

Mr. Speaker, I think that it was a good way to show the Canadian people that the Government of Canada is not only concerned with external affairs, armament or disarmament matters, but is also anxious to make sure that all Canadians, whether in Quebec, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, or any other province, really feel like Canadians, are really involved with their government and aware, either in Saskatchewan or elsewhere, of all the programs it has set up to provide them with jobs or health insurance or what have you.

Quebeckers in particular acknowledged this fact during the referendum campaign; in their case, I suggest that the federal government was right in explaining the situation to them, the