

We have had and been well served by a process called the first ministers' conference process in this country. When the Prime Minister and the premiers get together they truly are elected, equal and effective.

• (1450)

My question is this. If the subject of Senate reform develops to be an obstruction to constitutional renewal in Canada, is the minister and the government prepared to consider the alternative of abolishing the Senate and pursuing the Council of the Federation concept as was contained in their original proposals?

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Privy Council and Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, certainly abolition is one option if other things do not work. Our strong preference is for a profound change in the other place that would involve election, effectiveness and as close to equality as we can find.

I think we all know, sir, that this Canada round requires flexibility. We have seen flexibility from Quebec, we have seen flexibility from aboriginal leaders, we have seen flexibility from the proponents of the social charter. We are going to need that throughout the piece if we are going to make progress.

If any Canadians stick with extreme positions, we run the risk not only of losing the cause they are interested in, but we run the risk of losing this country. No responsible elected leader anywhere in Canada would want to accept the responsibility for that.

We had proposed, as the member says, the use of a federal-provincial device, the Council of the Federation. That was discussed at a Calgary conference, the same conference that found that the Triple-E Senate did not enjoy broad support. That was put aside.

Beaudoin-Dobbie has come in with another proposal that would make use of federal-provincial relations. We certainly would look very seriously at that.

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#### INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION

**Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

#### Oral Questions

The government's green plan extols the virtue of a well-informed public in environmental decision-making. Yet in spite of government statements to the contrary, a loud public outcry and vigorous internal scientific opposition, the International Joint Commission has announced the closure and dispersal of the largest, most valuable environmental library in the country. This is supposedly for budgetary reasons in spite of repeated surpluses in that budget.

What action does the government plan to take in response to this arrogant disregard for the public interest or is what the IJC is doing consistent with government policy? Is it government policy to see a diminished IJC, a discredited IJC?

**Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I think the decision taken by the IJC was taken in fulfilment of its mandate, which is to provide public information, but not necessarily to provide access to a library. It has kept the useful parts of its library for its own purposes. It will continue to respond to public inquiries that have to do with its mandate, but its mandate does not include running a library.

Indeed it is a strong IJC that we are looking for, particularly in connection with pollution in the Great Lakes and other files that they are working on. I believe we are going to have that. It has nothing to do with whether it has a library or not.

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. In fact, the very respected environmental group, Great Lakes United, which fights very hard against pollution across the Great Lakes basin, has said that the library is crucial, public access to the library is crucial and if the IJC does not reverse its decision, there is going to be serious consequences for scientific advance in the fight against pollution.

I want to ask the minister if this government will listen to these environmental groups that are fighting for the Great Lakes and will tell the IJC to reverse a decision which so dangerously threatens the Great Lakes security of thousands and thousands of Canadians.

**Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, no I am not going to ask the IJC to reverse its decision. Certainly there are many groups that are interested in information on the environment and both the Department of the Environment and