

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend is being misled, I am sure innocently, by a very garbled version of the facts relating to the particular section in question having to do with the equality of men and women. The conference document reflects exactly the agreement reached among the participants. It was not only my ruling as chairman at that meeting, but it was so understood and, I believe to the best of my knowledge, all the Provinces have confirmed that was exactly the understanding reached at the meeting. There seems to have been an innocent mistake made by some of the participants on behalf of the Native Council of Canada that a proposal they made was actually accepted by the meeting, but that was not in fact the case.

We took soundings across the country from the Attorneys General on Friday to see, first of all, whether or not the communicate we believed was exact was in fact exact, and the answer was, yes, it is; secondly, whether or not it would be possible to have an agreement to a further variation or a new variation which would now be agreed. A very large number of the Provinces were against that, and at the moment it appears that the version we will be laying on the Table in the House will be exactly the one which was presented at the end of the conference which, as I said, was the agreement reached at the conference.

• (1440)

POSITION OF PROVINCES

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Madam Speaker, I have in my hand not only a copy of the Accord that was signed but also a copy of the minutes of the meeting that dealt with this particular section. The wording that was laid before the meeting and that was written into this Accord that was reached behind the scenes was written in by Roy McMurtry of Ontario. It differs substantially from the version that was presented for signature.

The Minister undertook with the native people that he would discuss with the Provinces what their understanding is of this—as if there could be any doubt, as it is all committed to writing. What is the result of these discussions? What changes is the Minister going to propose to the provincial Ministers to correct what he alleges to be an oversight and a misunderstanding?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend is quite right, there cannot be any misunderstanding. But despite that, I am afraid that he has misunderstood. As I indicated in my answer to his first question, his quarrel is not with me, it is with all the Governments of Canada. All of them take the view that the conference communicate represents exactly what was agreed on at the conference. I do not know where he got the minutes, but the Provinces have agreed with us that the published text is the text that was agreed on. We have not only ascertained that, but have asked them if they would be prepared to make, as a variation, what the Native Council of

Canada asked. Too many Provinces are opposed to that for us to be confident that it is possible.

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BILINGUALISM

REPORTED STATEMENT BY MINISTER ON MAKING CANADA A FRENCH STATE

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, I should like to refer to an article which appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* a few days ago which reports remarks delivered at a meeting by the Secretary of State. He said that his role as Secretary of State is to further his ambition of making Canada a French country both inside and outside Quebec and the task of making Canada a French state.

I wonder if he would explain what he means by making "Canada a French state".

[*Translation*]

Hon. Serge Joyal (Secretary of State): Madam Speaker, I am glad that the Hon. Member has given me an opportunity to explain what I meant. The passage he has read is quoted out of context. What I told my audience and what I wish to repeat today is that Canada has a very clear linguistic policy. It specifies that French and English are the two official languages of Canada and have equal rights, status and privileges. Consequently, Canada should reflect the reality of the French fact in its policies as much as it has reflected the reality of the English fact throughout its history.

[*English*]

MINISTER'S MEANING

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, the Secretary of State said that his comments were taken out of context as referred to in the *Ottawa Citizen*. Today I obtained a French copy of the text of his remarks and I should like to read it and ask him the same question.

[*Translation*]

—because everything we undertake and everything we do so that Canada will be a French state—

[*English*]

I wonder if the Secretary of State of Canada would explain what he meant by that. It is not taken out of context but it is taken directly from his remarks as supplied to me by his own office.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Serge Joyal (Secretary of State): Madam Speaker, as I explained earlier, the Constitutional Act of Canada provides in Section 16 that Canada must reflect the reality of its French and English identities in its decisions and policies. When this principle received the approval of all the parties in this House, it was clear for everyone that the government and the people in charge of Canadian affairs in general must make every effort to put French and English on an equal footing. This is why we