

Oral Questions

• (1450)

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, surely innocent children in Iraq should not be the victims of that kind of mad policy.

My supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. Last September the Prime Minister co-chaired the World Summit for Children. That summit issued a declaration which stated that the essential needs of children and families must be protected, even in times of war and in violence-ridden areas.

In view of the fact that the Harvard study team to which I referred previously has estimated that 170,000 children under the age of five years will die as a result of the delayed effects of this war in the gulf, I want again to ask the Prime Minister what steps is Canada taking now to assist these children to avoid death, starvation, and devastating medical conditions. What are we doing to help the children?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, although some 34th in population I believe, Canada's contributions to the United Nations and all of her associated funds, including UNICEF, ranks us with the top four or five in the world.

Our contributions to UNICEF and our leadership on behalf of children is, I think, generally acknowledged to be very significant. One of the great tragedies is that there are some 40,000 children who die each day in the developing countries of Africa and throughout the developing world for want of an investment of \$5 per child.

Canada has provided, I think, quite substantial leadership and we are in the process of doing more to assist children throughout the world. It is an enormous tragedy when an innocent child dies for want of food or because of conditions created by its government.

We are working through the United Nations, the Security Council, and all of the agencies of the United Nations. We have done a lot and we are ready to do much more to assist children in developing countries and, indeed, in Iraq obviously.

But principally the problem of the children in Iraq comes from the leader of Iraq. If he wanted to correct many of these problems, he could do so immediately by conducting himself in a civilized way, by ceasing to act as

an international outlaw and by returning to the family of nations.

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[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The document on constitutional reform tabled yesterday proposes, and I quote: "To provide the Parliament of Canada with a new power to make laws for the efficient functioning of the economic union of Canada."

Yet, the government is claiming today, as it did yesterday, that it has no intention of interfering with the operation of basic financial institutions in Quebec such as the Deposit and investment Fund or the Desjardins Movement. Besides the good intentions, is the Prime Minister not forced to recognize that the extremely vague wording of this proposal actually provides such power to the Parliament of Canada and could therefore put Quebec in the unbearable situation of having to use the notwithstanding clause?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member only read the first paragraph. He failed to read the next two, which state, and I quote: "Federal legislation under this new power could not be enacted without the approval of at least two thirds of the provinces representing 50 per cent of the population."

An hon. member: Like in 1982!

Mr. Mulroney: Well, there is yet another article. There are three in all. The third one states that if Quebec for instance did not support the legislation, it could opt out altogether.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): There you go, Mr. Speaker, the truth is out. The Parliament of Canada—and correct me if I am wrong—would then have the power to pass legislation that would cripple Quebec financial institutions and force the Quebec government to manage its economy through notwithstanding clauses all the time. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Prime Minister that, as he is no doubt aware, ministers come and go and governments come and go, and that a Liberal government in this House tried and pass Bill S-31, which would have had that very effect.