

Oral Questions

The Canada Health Act respects the jurisdictions of the provinces and allows the provinces every flexibility in managing the system but does insist that they adhere to five principles to protect equal access for all Canadians in order that they receive the funds transferred from the federal government to the provinces. That has ensured that we are the best country in the world and that we have the best medicare system in the world.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the constructive changes the provinces want would be easy to achieve: stable, predictable funding along with legislation that puts the needs of patients ahead of the needs of bureaucrats.

Will the health minister today agree to meet with provinces that desperately want to have those constructive changes?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have met with provinces and will continue to meet with provinces. I will work with provinces in any way I can to ensure we have a system that meets the needs of Canadians that is not a two-tier system.

We know the agenda of the Reform Party. It wants a U.S. style two-tier system, one for the better off Canadians and one for the rest of Canadians. That is not the way we built our country and that is not what made the country great.

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[Translation]

REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour.

In his speech yesterday, the Prime Minister indicated that he still favoured administrative agreements as a way to meet Quebec's demand that the federal government withdraw from Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

Can the Minister of Labour tell us how Quebecers can trust the Prime Minister when he proposes administrative agreements, since the only time he proposed such an agreement—it was, may I remind you, in the area of manpower—the minister, in solidarity with her former boss, Daniel Johnson, rejected it, calling it a third-rate agreement?

• (1445)

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I will have to quote the Prime Minister's statement in extenso, since the member of the Bloc Québécois omitted part of the sentence. He said, and I quote: "We will keep open all the other roads to change, including administrative and constitutional means".

I think the intent is quite clear: to keep open both administrative and constitutional roads to change. Throughout this country's history, we have found various ways to make changes, without necessarily reopening the constitution. At this time, we only have to look at the whole issue of immigration in Quebec and all the powers granted to Quebec to choose its immigrants and welcome them into Quebec society. All this was done by administrative means. So we should certainly not set aside this way of effecting changes.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in response to Liza Frulla, who, last Monday, called for the federal government's withdrawal from the area of culture, how can the Minister of Labour answer that a mere administrative agreement could be enough to solve the problem, and will she dare give the same answer to stakeholders in the cultural industry?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stated very clearly that this country is on the road to change and that, in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century, Canada as a whole has no choice but to change because we now face international competitors that were not even on the scene 10 years ago.

We must question our ways of doing things. We must review the role of the various levels of government and this is what we in the federal government will work on after a no vote in the referendum.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the recent women's conference in Beijing, Canada was awarded the global award by the International Federation of Business and Professional Women.

Can the hon. Secretary of State for the Status of Women explain to us what this award means and on what basis Canada was selected to receive this prestigious prize?

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada was indeed honoured with this prestigious prize, and this goes to show that Canada is a great place to live for everyone. This is something we should all be proud of. This government has furthered the cause of women: their equality, prosperity and safety throughout the country, including Quebec. Remarkable progress has been made, and the Quebec minister herself agreed with this and congratulated Canada for it.

The men and women who attended the rally in Verdun last night recognized the benefits of living in Canada, the standard of living we enjoy in this country, and stated that they wanted to live a strong Quebec within a united Canada. They said no to separation.