

[English]

GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

PRESENTATION OF PETITION

Hon. John Lynch-Staunton (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, although Bill C-68 is no longer before us, I wish to present a petition which I received after the vote on the bill was taken. It is signed by 77 citizens from Northern Ontario who ask that the Senate not support Bill C-68.

[Translation]

QUESTION PERIOD

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

DISTRIBUTION OF VETO POWER— STATUS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Marcel Prud'homme: Honourable senators, yesterday the House of Commons read for the second time Bill C-110, an Act respecting constitutional amendments, which was referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs of the House of Commons.

Having always brought to the attention of my friends the importance of Canadian harmony, when I sat in the House of Commons —

[English]

Having made many speeches on the unity of Canada, I will not repeat them all during Question Period. However, I have come to the conclusion that to have a better, more harmonious country, there should be a veto for British Columbia. I have always felt that Canada is composed of five regions. Therefore, each of the five regions should have a veto. What is given to one does not take anything away from the others. It is a recognition of facts.

Is it the intention of the government to allow amendments to Bill C-110, the study of which starts today? I have been told that the bill will be given a rather quick study in committee in order to return it early to the House of Commons for third reading, after which it will be sent to the Senate. Of course, when the bill reaches the Senate, we will have more to say about it.

Is it the intention of the government to allow committee members to present amendments at this stage pertaining to a veto for the province of British Columbia?

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I understand the concern of my honourable friend. However, he will appreciate that I cannot predict or speculate about what might happen in a committee of the other

place. They are just commencing their hearings. I think we will need to keep an eye on that committee as they proceed with their deliberations.

Senator Prud'homme: Honourable senators, the Leader of the Government in the Senate sits in cabinet. She also sits in the national Liberal caucus, which will be meeting tomorrow. Would she kindly relay to her cabinet colleagues, and to her colleagues in the national Liberal caucus, that some members of the Senate would like to see the bill amended during the committee study, adding a veto for British Columbia?

Senator Fairbairn : Honourable senators, I am sure that members in the other place read the *Debates of the Senate*. They will be aware of my honourable friend's views, as well as the views of others. Of course I could not — and would not — comment on anything that might go on in either the cabinet circle or within the Liberal caucus.

Senator Prud'homme: If there were discussion in the national Liberal caucus tomorrow on this issue, would the minister at least relay to her colleagues that this matter was raised today in the Senate?

Senator MacEachen: Why do you not return to the fold, Marcel?

Senator Fairbairn: Honourable senators, as we all know, discussions within caucuses are, perhaps, the most private of all discussions. Parliament Hill is a small community. I am sure that the views of my honourable friend and others are known and noted. We will keep an eye on the issue as it unfolds.

TRANSPORT

SEARCH AND RESCUE HELICOPTER REPLACEMENT PROGRAM— PURCHASE OF UNITS WITHOUT TENDER— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau: Honourable senators, my question is for the minister. On Saturday, this past weekend, the urgency of replacing the Sea King helicopters once again became evident during a dramatic rescue off the Atlantic coast. A commendation should go out to our armed forces for the dramatic rescue they accomplished.

We now learn that the federal government is not holding an open bidding process for the selection of the replacement helicopters. Instead, the government is looking to purchase American-built Sikorsky Sea Hawk helicopters without going to tender. The rationale is that the government would get this equipment at under \$1 billion, thereby freeing up money to buy four British submarines. Would the minister please confirm to this chamber that her government is actually considering not going to an open bidding process to make such a purchase?

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, to my honourable friend, I will take that question as notice.