

the assistance of Canadian industries throughout the country to allow them to survive, maintain employment at its present level and develop new technologies, we do everything in our power to provide such assistance. Unfortunately, in certain cases, we cannot succeed. However, as you will agree, Madam Speaker, the extent of the information requested by the hon. member does not allow me to provide a complete answer during the question period. I shall be happy to provide this information in writing to the hon. member.

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[English]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

INFORMATION ON RAISING ALARM IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Hamilton West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. Some rescue efforts of a very efficient and daring Search and Rescue arm of the Canadian Armed Forces are thwarted by delays in receiving appropriate information. Can the minister inform the Canadian public what steps must be taken in these desperate emergency situations to bring search and rescue support in life-threatening situations?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, I understand very well the concern of the hon. member for Hamilton West, considering the regrettable incident which happened in his riding involving the drowning of two children. In the interests of everyone listening in the House and outside it, I would like to tell the hon. member that the best way to obtain the services of the Search and Rescue arm of the Armed Forces when in distress would be to first call the local police or local authorities to ensure that they have a contact with the co-ordination centre of Search and Rescue.

I can assure the hon. member and the House that every time a case like this happens we do our utmost to make any kind of improvement we can in terms of search and rescue procedure, so that we can save as many lives as possible and help all Canadians in such cases. We keep a sharp eye out to try to make any such improvements.

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THE CONSTITUTION

REQUEST FOR HOLDING OF FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE—PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister who has now perhaps had an opportunity to reflect a little more carefully and fully on the proposal put forward by the eight first ministers when they met last week. I think the Prime Minister would agree that it would be preferable to all concerned if we could reach agreement in Canada with regard to the contents of constitutional reform. In that light, I wonder if the Prime

Oral Questions

Minister could tell us what he thinks he has to lose in convening a first ministers' conference to discuss any aspects of constitutional reform—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark:—before that matter is finally voted upon in the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, a simple answer can be given to that question. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition asks me what he thinks we have to lose. It is very simple. If we go the route suggested by the premiers and by the party of the Leader of the Opposition, we have to lose the charter of rights, we have to lose equalization, we have to lose the guarantee of aboriginal rights, we have to lose the rights of official language majorities in Canada to have education in their language in every province. We have to lose the Official Languages Act. We have to lose mobility rights. We have to lose, indeed, a great deal of things which make Canada Canada.

● (1500)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: The Prime Minister speaks with a great deal more certainty than knowledge. He has the opportunity, as the first minister of the country, to put on the agenda of a first ministers' conference any questions he wants to put on the agenda. He can put his charter there. He can put equalization there. He can put any question there.

The simple matter that I want to put to him is: why does he not accept the opportunity which is open to him as Prime Minister of Canada to bring together the 11 first ministers to see what agreement can be found on his agenda, or on theirs, so that we can get agreement in Canada on a wide range of constitutional reform? What does he have to lose? Why will he not proceed now before the matter is finally voted upon by the House of Commons?

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member asks what have I got to lose in meeting the premiers. I remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I offered to meet the premiers. They chose to meet within days of the matter going to the Supreme Court. That was a fact well known by them. They chose to meet on Holy Thursday before our break of four days here. I indicated that I was free and available to meet with them during those days, and the Leader of the Opposition was party to an agreement which said that we had to move all amendments by last night.

If the Leader of the Opposition was so convinced that we could gain by a further meeting—he knows that I was prepared for that meeting—why did he not enjoin some of his friends amongst the premiers to accept the offer of meeting that I made to them?