

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Clark:** Let me ask the Minister of Justice something else. He will recall that on several occasions the government leader here, the Prime Minister of Canada, has said that he had what amounts to a commitment by the British government that it would use all of its powers to force its party, its majority in its parliament, to support the passage of any Canadian proposal. That is called a three-line whip. He said that most recently on January 29 in this House when he said: "She will put on a three-line whip to pass it through the House of Commons".

I wonder if the Minister of Justice will tell the House of Commons explicitly at what date that undertaking was given to the Government of Canada and by whom it was given.

**Mr. Chrétien:** Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister said yesterday that the conversations between him and Mrs. Thatcher or her ministers are not to be debated here; if the British government has something to say, it can say it. Yesterday Mrs. Thatcher made very clear the position of the British government, which is that when it receives the resolution of this House and the Senate, it will act promptly, according to precedent and the law.

**Mr. Clark:** Madam Speaker, this Canadian House of Commons has been given a solemn assurance by our Prime Minister as to a question of fact. I am trying to determine the basis of that solemn declaration and, consequently, to determine whether or not it is a fact. The simple way to clear it up is for the Minister of Justice to tell us when that commitment was given and by whom. It is a simple question. He can answer it directly. Again, if he evades it, it must be because he has something to hide.

[Translation]

**Mr. Chrétien:** Madam Speaker, I did not attend the meeting between Mrs. Thatcher and the Prime Minister of Canada. The Prime Minister of Canada made a very clear statement on that subject here and if the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants an immediate answer the best way is to adopt the resolution in the next few days and we will soon see what the Parliament of England will do.

[English]

## DISCUSSIONS WITH PREMIER OF SASKATCHEWAN

**Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West):** Madam Speaker, I too would like to direct my question to the Minister of Justice. Last week the attorney general of Saskatchewan spent the whole week in Ottawa closeted with officials of the minister's department, and possibly the minister himself, discussing the constitutional package. Subsequently an official or officials of the minister's department and the attorney general went to Hawaii to discuss the matter further with the Premier of Saskatchewan. I should like to know if the minister is in a position to report on the nature of those discussions. Precisely what was put on the table? What was suggested by the federal government in order to obtain Saskatchewan's support for the constitutional package?

• (1420)

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development):** Madam Speaker, during the fall and since we came back after Christmas, I have had occasion to talk with many ministers of different governments about what we were doing, giving them explanations, discussing propositions and so on. We have done that with different governments and with the government of Saskatchewan. The hon. member knows our resolution and they know what it is, so it is up to them to make up their minds. They made some suggestions; some of those have been accepted and some rejected. The policy of the government is well known and it is being debated at this time in committee. We have almost finished the work in the committee. They know very well what kind of resolution the House of Commons and Senate will approve soon.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Madam Speaker, if I may be permitted to say so, that was a "Waikiki response"! Or, en français, "une whacky réponse"! It is all right for the minister to flim-flam around but I asked a specific question. I should like to know whether a specific proposal was put to the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan to obtain his support for the constitutional package and whether an official from the department went to Hawaii to convey that to the attorney general of Saskatchewan. When does the minister expect a response? Is there any time limit? Has he received a response in the negative from the Premier of Saskatchewan, or what is the exact situation, without the equivocation we have heard to date?

**Mr. Epp:** Tell us about the Honolulu formula.

[Translation]

**Mr. Chrétien:** Madam Speaker, since the hon. member wants me to answer him in French I would say that indeed we had discussions with the Saskatchewan government just as we did with other governments. They wanted clarifications, whether any changes were contemplated and we discussed that. The government has made its decisions and the study of nearly all clauses has now been completed. At his press conference about two weeks ago Premier Blakeney stated he would make up his mind once the House of Commons is through with its work. We have already taken our decision and the committee was advised each time we undertook the study of a clause or when we tabled amendments before it. The colleague of the hon. member knows full well the nature of the amendments proposed by the Canadian government.

\* \* \*

[English]

## ASTRA TRUST

## REQUEST FOR REFERENCE OF OPERATION TO COMMITTEE

**Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood):** Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance, my question is for the