

per cent level, as a combination of those three, will indeed be reached by the end of 1985. I think it is fair to say that it will perhaps be exceeded by that time, because there are some elements of research and development that we think ought to be added, such as marketing structures along the way, at the same time as technical problems are being worked out. I suppose it is purely a matter of opinion, but my opinion is—and I believe it is a fairly objective and well-informed opinion—that we will reach that objective.

[Translation]

## THE CONSTITUTION

### AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

**Hon. Martial Asselin:** Honourable senators, my question is for the government leader. This past weekend, an important delegation of women from all the provinces and the Northwest Territories were called by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women to a meeting in Ottawa to discuss the constitutional future of the Council in the light of constitutional changes. This large group of women passed several resolutions asking for the Charter of Rights to include legal recognition of their group.

For instance, it was suggested to the Minister of Justice that the Charter of Rights be discussed in Canada by a constituent assembly so that this important section of the Canadian electorate could express its views and state its rights.

In the wake of this important conference, will the government and in particular the Minister of Justice accept to include in the Charter of Rights some of the recommendations of that group.

• (2025)

[English]

**Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, the recommendations which were produced by that women's conference, of course, are being studied very carefully by the government at the present time.

[Translation]

**Senator Asselin:** Will the government take a decision about their claims before the close of the constitutional debate which began today in the House of Commons and which will soon get under way in the Senate?

[English]

**Senator Perrault:** Honourable senators, the question will be taken as notice and further information will be sought on that point. Interestingly enough, when the Right Honourable the Prime Minister suggested in the other place that the government may well be prepared to adopt the recommendations of the women's conference if the official opposition expresses support for the effort to enshrine a truly great Charter of Rights, his offer was totally rejected. Perhaps the spokesman for the opposition in this chamber will explain the inexplicable.

[Translation]

**Senator Asselin:** I would not think that the Leader of the Government would dare venture on such slippery ground. I

[Senator Obse.]

fully appreciate why the opposition leader and his supporters refused to negotiate women's rights in exchange for other concessions the government might offer them about the constitutional repatriation.

I think the government in office is not being brave and courageous when it asks that members of the opposition assume its responsibilities. The government must be able to shoulder its responsibilities and then ask us to judge its decisions.

In any event, if that is what the government wants we in the official opposition have already taken our responsibilities. We are still capable of doing so. But I am saying that the argument just raised by the Leader of the Government is the weakest we can hear in this debate—asking the opposition to decide for the government.

[English]

**Senator Buckwold:** This is a speech. Why don't you ask a question?

**Senator Asselin:** I am coming to the question because he did not answer my question. He only made comments about what I said before.

**Senator Frith:** He said he would take your question as notice and he would get the information.

**Senator Flynn:** No, no, no.

[Translation]

**Senator Asselin:** I will go further. Considering that perhaps my question was too difficult for the Leader of the Government, I will put it in a simpler form.

In order to release the existing tension between the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the minister responsible for that advisory council, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, and to restore peace within that organization, does the government intend to have that group report directly to Parliament instead of leaning on the mercy of a minister who is using his political power to pressure it?

• (2030)

[English]

**Senator Perrault:** As I stated a few moments ago, the recommendations of that conference will be considered carefully by the government, but, honourable senators, the amendments which were produced by the government represent a substantial advance for the women of Canada. No one suggests that the amendments represent perfection, but the former chairman of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Doris Anderson, spoke in most glowing terms about these amendments prior to her resignation. I think even yet she must admit the amendments represent substantial progress.

**Senator Asselin:** Then why did she resign?

**Senator Perrault:** To paraphrase her remarks, she said that these amendments represent great progress for the women of Canada. The government is sympathetic to improving the situation of the women in this country. If these further ideas have merit, they will certainly be given serious consideration.