

constitutional proposal, was there any real reference to the rather drastic measures that the government proposes with regard to the powers of the Senate in future constitutional amendments.

Senator Perrault: The suggestion advanced by the honourable senator will certainly be given consideration.

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

IRAQI-IRANIAN WAR

INQUIRY WHETHER CANADA HAS TAKEN INITIATIVE TO EFFECT CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES

Hon. Peter Bosa: Honourable senators, can the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell us whether this government has taken any initiatives to bring about a cessation of hostilities between the State of Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran?

● (1420)

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, given the many other challenges confronting Canadians, I am aware of no direct initiative on our part to intervene as the mediator of the Middle East dispute. Indeed, I have no information at hand to suggest that Canada's services, which have been requested in past disputes, have been requested in this instance.

Some questions have been asked about the Iran-Iraq conflict by many Canadians. Canada supported the Security Council Resolution of September 28, which calls for a mediated settlement. If it continues, war could become a drawn-out stalemate, entailing further damage to the Iraqi and Iranian economies, disrupting oil supplies and destabilizing the Middle East region. It is especially important that shipping through the Strait of Hormuz not be disrupted, a point emphasized by the Prime Minister of Iraq in New York on October 1.

Tanker traffic is moving fairly normally and the threat of closure of the strait has receded somewhat, but only an end to hostilities will guarantee that the war does not spread.

More specifically with respect to the inquiry by the Honourable Senator Bosa, there is no obvious role for Canada in mediating a ceasefire, as it is the view of the government that the Islamic countries are best placed to effect this particular kind of initiative.

There are only 25 to 30 Canadians remaining in Iraq, including the press and six embassy staff, and about the same number are in Iran. To the best of our knowledge, all are well and safe.

THE CONSTITUTION DEBATE

ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION BY BRITISH GOVERNMENT

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I would like to ask the Leader of the Govern-

[Senator Murray.]

ment whether he can confirm the reports of a statement attributed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, to the effect that the Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of Great Britain, has assured him that any resolution of the Parliament of Canada would be accepted by the British government without objection.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, information has been sought with respect to the conversation between the Honourable Mark MacGuigan and the Honourable John Roberts and the Right Honourable the Prime Minister of Great Britain. However, I have no document before me which would serve to provide enlightenment on the question posed by the Leader of the Opposition.

[Translation]

Hon. Martial Asselin: Honourable senators, a supplementary question. Is it true that this meeting between the Right Honourable the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the two Canadian delegates lasted only four minutes?

[English]

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators will recall that a similar question was posed yesterday. Certain information has been requested, but I am not aware that anyone held a stopwatch in order to time that particular conversation. An inquiry has gone forward.

Senator Steuart: It does not take long to say "yes."

Senator Flynn: When are the ministers returning to Canada?

Senator Perrault: It is my understanding that they are now back safely on Canadian soil.

PARLIAMENTARY AMENDMENT OF PROPOSED CONSTITUTION ACT, 1980

Hon. Heath Macquarrie: Honourable senators, I have a question in further reference to the putative resolution from both houses of Parliament. After all of the discussion yesterday, and discussions elsewhere, may I ask the Leader of the Government if it is his view that the deliberations of the houses, whether in committee or in the full house in each case, could in effect alter the terms of the said resolution?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the Prime Minister, in his public statements, has indicated that proposals for constructive changes and amendments will be given serious consideration by the government. It is felt by the government that there is real merit in having a highly qualified parliamentary committee made up of representatives of the Senate and of the House of Commons direct detailed attention to all of the provisions of what are very important and historic proposals. The attitude of the government throughout the process, I assure you, will be very forthcoming.

● (1425)

Senator Macquarrie: May I also ask, in recalling that this is a parliamentary action, a joint resolution of Parliament, and