

accepting the idea, as surely we must, that substantial changes may be made by those parliamentary bodies, was it not considered perhaps premature for the ministers to present a document to Her Majesty and to the Prime Minister in London before Parliament had, in fact, given it final form?

Senator Perrault: The attitude of the government, honourable senators, is simply this. Her Majesty the Queen, because of her great interest in the subject of the Canadian Constitution and her role as Queen of Canada, has the undeniable right to be kept fully informed and has the right to receive constitutional information and should receive progress reports. Indeed, I suggest that it would be unseemly and wrong if the government were not to keep Her Majesty fully advised of events as they occur with respect to the proposal to patriate the Constitution. It is certainly not out of the question that other visits may be made to Britain by government ministers during the course of the next few weeks.

I would remind honourable senators that prior to this time there have been contacts with representatives of the British government. Surely this process of apprising Her Majesty and representatives of the British government of constitutional developments as they occur constitutes sound parliamentary practice as well as good manners.

LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN PROPOSED CONSTITUTION ACT, 1980

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I have another question concerning the document which has been the subject of questions up to now.

I understand that in the proposed charter submitted to the premiers at the conference at the beginning of September it was mentioned that the right of usage of the French and English languages would be applicable to the provinces of New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba. In the proposal now before the other place, and the document which has been tabled here, this reference has been withdrawn and there is no mention of New Brunswick or Ontario. There is only a reference to section 133 of the B.N.A. Act, which, of course, continues in force, and to section 23 of the Statutes of Manitoba. Can we have an explanation of this? Is this a bargaining point between Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Davis?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I would be pleased to speak to that point more fully when, God willing, the debate takes place. But the intent of the proposal is to ensure that, where numbers warrant, minority language education shall be available in all provinces.

Senator Flynn: I know that. My question is about linguistic rights and the use of the French or the English language in the legislatures of New Brunswick and Ontario. This was in the proposal as submitted to the conference, and has been removed from the present proposal.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, may I take that inquiry as notice? Detailed information will be sought and perhaps a reply incorporated in my speech on Tuesday.

[Translation]

AIRLINES

SALE OF NORDAIR SHARES—STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF TRANSPORT

Hon. Martial Asselin: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Minister of State for Economic Development, Senator Olson, concerning the current situation with respect to the sale of Nordair shares.

The government he represents, in 1978, I think it was, decided to turn over the shares of Nordair to Air Canada with the view to privatizing that corporation a year later.

When we were in power, we had made the same decision. Of course, the then Minister of Transport had meetings and consultations to see how the federal government would sell to the private sector the Nordair shares held by Air Canada.

We know that different groups met to make proposals to the government and that apparently the present Minister of Transport, the Honourable Jean-Luc Pepin, had made the decision to sell the shares of Nordair to Quebecair and other partners from Ontario and Quebec who had joined Quebecair.

We are told now that all that has been shelved, that after receiving the comments and objections of other groups of businessmen from Quebec and Ontario, Mr. Pepin has decided to let the thing die and no longer maintain the decision to sell the shares of Nordair to private interests, and that Air Canada is going to hold on to the shares it has in Nordair. There is no longer any talk of selling the Nordair interests to private groups.

This matter raises great financial difficulties among certain groups from both Ontario and Quebec who had joined together to purchase the shares of Nordair.

In view of that ambiguous situation, could the minister make a ministerial statement at a later sitting and tell us what is the current position of his government and of the Minister of Transport concerning the sale of Nordair?

● (1430)

[English]

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): Honourable senators, I will take the question or certain of its aspects as notice. I should like to say, however, that I appreciate the honourable senator's recalling that the action taken by the government, when he was in office, to put together a proposal for the disposition of Nordair was followed in exactly the same manner by this government.

His intimation that the Minister of Transport had in fact reached a decision as to the sale of that airline is something I would not like to speculate on. Whether he can read the minister's mind, I do not know, but there was no public announcement of any such decision—at least not to my knowledge.

In any event, I will look into the matter and determine whether the minister is ready to make a definitive statement