

THE CONSTITUTION

STATEMENT OF MINISTER ON REFERENCE OF PROPOSALS TO SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I wish to address a question to the Minister of Justice. Did he consult with the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs or did he adopt the position taken by some provincial spokesmen from time to time when he said on the weekend that he would not refer any of the constitutional proposals to the Supreme Court because the Supreme Court is very unreliable?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, the hon. member should read the whole sentence. I said that if we were to refer them, one of the problems would be that in terms of timing it would change. It is in that context that I said it. Further, I checked with the reporter to confirm he understood it that way.

Mr. Dick: Madam Speaker, since it is 113 years versus one sentence, the timing does not seem to be all that crucial. I was wondering whether the minister was somewhat influenced by the fact that the government in a previous incarnation had a portion of its Bill C-60 dealing with the Senate turned down by the Supreme Court, and it is afraid there are sections in this resolution which will be turned down by the Supreme Court?

Mr. Chrétien: Not at all, Madam Speaker. At the time of the move on the Senate, it was not certain that Parliament could change the status of the Senate. The Supreme Court said it was not possible for the Parliament of Canada to change it, but the British Parliament could do that. With the change in the constitution, we will be going straight to London for the last time.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

MODERNIZATION OF PAPER FACTORIES IN QUEBEC

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. I wonder whether the minister can now put the House up to date regarding the joint federal-provincial proposal for a policy on the modernization of pulp and paper factories?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): I am indeed very pleased to report to the hon. member for Joliette that cabinet has substantially increased the envelope for Quebec. It has in fact earmarked 50 per cent of the budget for this nation-wide program for Quebec alone. In other words, after making the required adjustments, our contribution to Quebec is 40 per cent greater than that to

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Ontario, and I trust, like the hon. member no doubt, that Quebec will sign this agreement as soon as possible.

Mr. La Salle: Madam Speaker, the minister has just stated that he hopes his counterpart from Quebec will sign this agreement. Can the minister assure the House that this program will be started soon? Also, in light of the 15 projects or so that are mentioned so often, what does the minister intend to do to have these projects launched as soon as possible?

Mr. De Bané: Madam Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to question his conscience on this matter. This program is aimed at the pulp and paper industry and in this field, the same corporations are operating in all provinces. Why is it such a big success in the other provinces? Why are the investments in this program ten times greater in Ontario than in Quebec? One cannot always hide behind the screen of nationalism to explain why this program, which is directed at all the provinces where the same corporations, most of them American, are involved, is a success everywhere except in Quebec, where it is at a standstill. I would like the hon. member to consider this question as well.

Mr. La Salle: Madam Speaker, if I were a minister, I would discuss this matter with my opposite number in Quebec, because I think many Quebecers would like to get an affirmative answer as soon as possible.

As a supplementary, Madam Speaker, knowing that for the establishment of a paper mill the minister chooses an area well known to him, and considering also what his Quebec colleague proposed when he spoke on September 5, in a very limited municipality, I should like to ask the minister whether he can give an affirmative answer. If not, what is his final position about that paper mill?

Mr. De Bané: Madam Speaker, in reply to the first question, I would tell the hon. member that I sincerely hope that the conditions imposed by cabinet will be accepted without delay by the Quebec government. The second question deals with the speech Mr. Bérubé made on September 5, as we all know, in Rimouski, to announce the project of the century for the valley. The whole valley population has known all along, of course, that the announcement was an electoral gimmick that will be short-lived because, as the hon. member knows, according to the conditions mentioned in that speech of September 5, the mill should get a grant equal to 75 per cent of the cost of the project, which is obviously impossible. That is why I am now optimistic. I have two reasons to be: because finally Mr. Bérubé no longer announces projects for the valley without going there himself, and he has been there, and most of all because the people of the Matapedia Valley have created a committee to find out which of the two governments does not co-operate.