

The Address

However, I have a lot to say on the issue of Franco-Ontarians. It is true that I was born in Ontario and it is true also that I believe that if we are to preserve the French language in North America, Quebec must become sovereign. There is no doubt in my mind on that issue.

It is not because Quebec wants to reject francophones outside Quebec, that is for sure. Quebec does not want to do that. It is simply because, in the end, and the hon. member certainly experienced it, in English Canada, Canadian history is the story of the assimilation of francophones.

From the beginning, from Lord Durham on, Canadian history boils down to an attempt to assimilate francophones.

In the West, at the beginning of the century, they passed all kinds of laws to eliminate French. In my own province of Ontario, French was banned for 40 years. Today, there are anglophone provinces where, in spite of rulings by the Supreme Court of Canada, the established rights of francophones are being ignored.

There have been several rulings by the Supreme Court of Canada stating that Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba were wrong in not enforcing the francophones' acquired rights. Even now, this ruling is being ignored.

I want to say to my hon. colleague that if the constitutional rights of the English minority had not been respected by Quebec, there would have been a general outcry the very next day. However, in the rest of Canada, ignoring francophones' rights goes unnoticed.

The assimilation of francophones is a huge problem and I do believe that Quebec's sovereignty will solve it, at least for francophones in Quebec. This will ensure the survival of the French language in North America. I truly believe that it will give a sense of renewed hope to francophones outside Quebec.

• (1855)

[English]

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I will leave the French language question to the hon. member.

I want to ask him a question regarding agriculture because I was surprised by some of the comments he was making regarding the minister of agriculture and what we in the Liberal Party did with regard to supply management.

The hon. member must be aware that when his leader was on this side of the House representing the Conservative Party, it was his party and his leader at that time who told Canadian farmers they would be protected, that they were going to protect them under the NAFTA and they were going to protect them at the GATT. In fact he was being a little less than honest with Canadian farmers as was the previous government in terms of what they were doing at the GATT. Also, what they were saying

internationally was a different story from what they were telling Canadian farmers at home.

I am somewhat surprised. I take it the hon. member is the agriculture critic. I am surprised during this debate when we were making representations internationally that in fact we heard nothing from the Bloc. In fact during the first week in Question Period there was no question directed toward the Minister of Agriculture from that whole side regarding this very important issue, an issue of great concern to Canadian farmers which is the issue of ice cream and yogurt.

I want to ask the hon. member who is an agricultural representative from the Bloc why it is that when his leader was on this side of the House he was telling Canadian farmers something different from what he is now saying on that side of the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Marchand: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was probably absent from the House on Monday because there was a question on that very subject.

[English]

We asked a question last Monday on agriculture and ice cream and yogurt. Maybe the hon. member was not there.

Mr. Speller: I was there. That was a week later.

Mr. Marchand: A week later than what?

Mr. Speller: Than when the House opened.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I remind the hon. members that they must address their comments through the Speaker.

Mr. Marchand: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. That could be attributed to inexperience.

[English]

The only reason the question was asked last Monday was mainly because negotiations are ongoing and we wanted to have it in good time.

Also, I think criticisms about the Conservatives and how the Conservatives did not do their job are cheap shots. It is so easy to say it is the fault of the Conservatives, that they did not do their job. Those are just cheap shots.

Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has made reference to certain quotations of former Prime Minister Trudeau indicating to the effect that he would not sell our goddamn grain.

The statement that he has attributed to the former Prime Minister is not accurate. The statement that was made by the former Prime Minister was: "Why should I sell your wheat?" He then proceeded to answer the question and told the western Canadian farmer as to why he would sell the wheat for the western Canadian farmer. I know this because I was there.