

## Oral Questions

[English]

I have been privileged to serve as a member of Parliament, not just in this Chamber, but in its committees, in our party caucus, in the cabinet, in my community and across this country.

Our system today is subject to a lot of criticism. That is healthy. Let us, however, paraphrase the words of Churchill who said that our system of government has its problems but when we look at all the other systems then we will decide ours is not so bad after all.

What comes next? I should tell you that I have already begun to plan with my riding executive for my next election campaign, but—

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** I know that this depends on the Almighty and of course my constituents, but I want to tell you about the spirit in which I make these plans. That spirit is reflected in the words of Wilfrid Laurier in his classic speech to the young Liberals of Quebec in 1877 when he said:

I am a Liberal. I am one of those who thinks that always and everywhere in human things there are abuses to be reformed, new horizons to be opened up and new forces to be developed.

Many of you are familiar with those words but very few are familiar with the words that came after in that classic speech. Laurier said:

Our means are limited but our nature is perfectible and we have the infinite as our arena. Thus there is always room for the improvement of our conditions, for the perfecting of our nature and for the attainment by a larger number of an easier life.

These words are as relevant today as when they were spoken over 115 years ago.

When I walked in the door of the House of Commons that fall day in 1962, after that altercation with the guard, the next thing that happened was I found myself standing here speaking to you, responding to words of tribute I appreciate very much. Standing here speaking in this marvellous place, in spite of its problems, is still the focal point to which Canadians look when it comes to the protection and enhancement of their liberties and well-being. May it always be such.

Looking out from this Chamber and all across this great country, surely I can conclude by saying as did—

[Translation]

—George Étienne Cartier, when he wrote the following as a student 158 years ago: "*Comme le dit un vieil adage, rien n'est si beau que son pays. À son aspect, le Canadien s'écrie: Ô Canada, mon pays! mes amours!*"

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I have been able to serve and work for my country and its people for what George Etienne Cartier called "Canada, my own beloved land" and hope to be able to continue to do so for some time yet. I say to all those who have helped me to do this, merci, thank you very much. I am eternally grateful.

[Editor's Note: All hon. members rose and applauded.]

## ORAL QUESTION

• (1440)

[Translation]

## THE CONSTITUTION

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister, if I can find one. My question is directed to whoever is the spokesperson for the government at this time.

We read in the media that confusion reigns in the current constitutional debate. Formal talks ended a week ago, and the country is still in the dark. I would like to know from the government whether someone will soon report to the House on his matter. We would like to know whether the Prime Minister will convene a First Ministers' Conference soon, so that Canada will know exactly where we are on this question. People are fed up, and they want these issues to be settled as soon as possible.

[English]

**Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, discussions are ongoing between the federal government and the provinces. If it would be useful to have a First Ministers' Conference the Prime Minister is prepared to do so, but he is awaiting a report from the Minister Responsible for Federal-Provincial Relations.