

Supply

speaking more than one language, that is about making Canada work and using the talent of every citizen.

Our agenda is an economic agenda. Our agenda is a social agenda. Our agenda is a healing agenda. If we stay on the straight and narrow, the road the Prime Minister has set for us—

[Translation]

—if we put the emphasis on job creation and economic growth, it is obvious that Canadians and Canada will work, which is our goal in this whole debate on Canadian unity.

[English]

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Madam Speaker, several things which the hon. member for Hamilton East alluded to talked about our playing into the hands of the BQ, that we were bashing federalism, that we were engaging in negative rhetoric and that we were on a constitutional treadmill.

Let me make it painfully clear so that every member in this House understands. We are not talking about the Constitution as such. We are talking about federalism and this is what needs to be discussed in this House. Surely there is a difference between wrangling about the Constitution and about federalism. There is not one person in this House, I hope, who would talk about how dreadful Canada is. That is simply not true.

• (1545)

We heard those comments coming across. We believe this country is worth fighting so hard for that we are here out of other careers, not people who have made their living off politics for years and years. We are asking for an open and frank discussion about this, not getting into the tirades that we have heard about. This is not right.

When we talk about such things as our position on bilingualism let me remind the member again because of any one else on the government side she probably has poured over our blue sheet more than anyone else. The member well knows the position of this party on official bilingualism. It is not what she referred to as English only.

Let me give the hon. member a chance to say that there is something positive about a debate on this. Perhaps it is unfortunate that someone else came up with the idea before they did.

I heard the member for Brant talking about how confused she is about the election and how people did not talk about the Constitution. Much has changed. I would like the hon. member to comment on this. We did not talk about it at great lengths because Charlottetown was so new and Meech Lake was so new and painful. However, we discussed this in the election last fall.

May I ask the member to comment on the fact that things are much different now. There were eight BQ in the House last time around and there are now 54.

Quite frankly the Liberals got smoked in Quebec during the election and she knows that. The provincial situation there is much different now than it was last fall as an election is imminent.

May she discuss with us very briefly why there is such an obsession on the other side to defend status quo federalism, as her comrade from Brant talked about earlier. Why is there is such a partisan difficulty with a tirade in this? Why can we not just discuss this so that we are building a new country together and the BQ and others in Quebec would want to come to it?

Ms. Copps: Madam Speaker, I guess I get excited about the issue because I care about the future of my country. I believe that the motives of the member certainly are moving in the same direction. She cares about the country. She wants to see the country stay together. I appeal to her and to her colleagues that the direction of their policies would have the unfortunate and unexpected opposite effect.

When they introduced a motion, as they did only a few weeks ago to basically carve up the country into linguistic categories where there would be English in all the provinces except Quebec and then French except on the west island of Montreal, they were reinforcing the idea that somehow what is going to keep this country together is a kind of linguistic ghettoization.

I believe the unexpected results of their policies are to feed into the same kind of message that the Bloc is using to encourage people in Quebec to follow the road of separation.

The simple message of the Bloc is that Quebec works without Canada. The unfortunate message of the linguistic policies of the Reform Party is that Canada would work better without Quebec. That is the message that comes out. The distinction of the policies of the Liberal Party and the policies of the Government of Canada is that a fundamental tenant of our party's belief is that this nation historically was built and in the future will be built on the principle of two founding nations and the importance of every other person who came to this country.

My great grandparents came from Ireland. Technically they were neither anglophones nor francophones. They were on the republican side of the Irish.

The reality is other individuals and groups have come together to form an incredible strength, a real asset to this country. In recognizing the fundamental rights of two founding peoples we underline the importance of providing opportunities and equality for every citizen of this country. I think it is important to compare that with the route taken by the United States that did not have a two founding nations principle. It basically said to