

The Address

• (1600)

Only the Bank of Canada was fined. The other three had their charges dropped on the argument that federal entities cannot be prosecuted under Ontario pollution laws. Such an occurrence is appalling. The green plan created by this government should be addressing such problems.

For this reason we must consider carefully the importance of setting stringent international and national environmental protective standards. Without such standards the likely result is a confusing variety of regulations differing in both strength and scope, encouraging a low level of environmental protection in some areas and creating loopholes.

I want to deal with another important area. Mr. Speaker, I know you have told me I only have a minute. I may want to indicate to my colleagues that I would like to have a little more time, but I will see what questions come. I would like to speak about the process we are facing now, that is the constituent assembly and the referendum question. Both those questions under study at this time need to be explained. I would appreciate getting a question either on the referendum or on the constituent assembly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, let me just say that the challenge of the national unity is enormous, but it is worth tackling. We must face it in a Canadian spirit, with love and kindness. We must find solutions to make this country a greater and better place to live. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Guy Ricard (Laval—Ouest): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question to the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier. I know that he supports dualism in Canada, and that he has always, at least since I have been a member of this House, defended all Canadians, anglophones and francophones alike. He is a person who is constantly fighting for the rights of everyone.

While I was listening to the speaker who rose before him, the member for South Shore, something he said caught my attention. He said that Canadians should talk to one another. In his speech, the member for Ottawa—Vanier said something along the same line. So I would ask him to elaborate a bit on that last remark, that is,

should we, as Canadians, talk to each other in order to understand one another or is it useless to do so?

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is true that we need to talk, but I would like to say to my colleague that, in the Speech from the Throne, the government proposes to establish another parliamentary committee, another tool of communication, but with this difference which I am going to explain.

The parliamentary committee that will be established next September will draw from the Beaudoin—Edward Committee, the Spicer Commission and a government paper that will be presented to it this summer, I suppose, and it will travel through Canada to consult all the legislative assemblies, not the people, but the legislative assemblies; it will report back in February 1992, not to the Parliament, but to the government.

So, I say to government members that they will have to clarify this situation or explain, to me and to all Canadians, why a direct dialogue with Canadians is excluded. Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that with the Spicer Commission, the Beaudoin—Edwards Commission and all the commissions that I mentioned earlier, the situation would have been clear enough. But that is not the case! After having reviewed all those commissions, one would have thought that all the political parties of this House could adopt a common position and have it ratified and presented to the people of Canada, and that the problem would be somewhat solved.

But no! They announce some task force, a study group composed of a government majority which will review next September the said documents and report not to the House of Commons nor to the Senate but to the government.

I say to the hon. member that that is beyond me. Why not go to the people? Why not tell us directly what is happening and what propositions we should consider?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier for his speech. Everybody knows how perceptive he is in constitutional matters. I can even tell him that we listen to him with great interest because we know that even when we were very bound by governmental solidarity he did show more vision than we did in 1981–1982 as he foresaw the problems we experience now.