

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 27, 1995

The House met at 11 a.m.

---

*Prayers*

---

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

### WAR MEASURES ACT

**Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should immediately make an official public apology, accompanied by financial compensation, to the hundreds of citizens of Quebec who were victims of arbitrary arrest and unjustified detention during the enforcement of the War Measures Act in the early '70s.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with some emotion, not to say very strong emotion, that I rise in this House today to recall tragic events in the memories of Quebecers, involving individuals and the exercise of democracy in the 1970s. I will also be referring, in the course of this motion, to actions and events that continue today.

You have just read, Mr. Speaker, the motion that I tabled on October 5, 1994 in this House, which, in brief, has two objectives: to put the record straight with regard to the October events, in particular the imposition of war measures, and to recognize the victims of the imposition of the War Measures Act, on the one hand, and on the other, to disassociate the sovereignist movement from the unfortunate events of the time initiated by members of the FLQ. I refer, naturally to the death of Pierre Laporte in 1970.

Why are we making this motion in the House today? First, I repeat that it was tabled in October 1994, at the time of the release of the movie "Octobre" by director Pierre Falardeau, depicting the days leading up to the death of Pierre Laporte. This film was subsidized in part by the National Film Board, if I am not mistaken, and aroused the indignation and ire of some of my hon. colleagues in the Reform Party and in the Liberal Party in this House.

What did my hon. colleagues say? I refer simply to the remarks of the Reform member for Calgary Southeast, who, in her criticism of the funding of Mr. Falardeau's film, linked

separatists, members of the FLQ and the cause of sovereignty in Quebec. They implied—and so did several members of the Liberal Party, this being the argument of our federalist opponents—that such organizations were part of the same camp as all the pro-sovereignty groups and individuals who have been supporting the cause using democratic means for over 25 years; I am referring naturally to the Parti Québécois and its predecessors, the RIN and RN, and to the Bloc Québécois, which has only been on the scene for the past few years.

I would first like to state loud and clear that no sovereignist, no official spokesperson of the democratic sovereignist movement, has never even considered supporting, in any way whatsoever, the criminal acts committed by certain individual members of the FLQ. On the contrary, in 1970, just days after the assassination of Pierre Laporte and the imposition of war measures, representatives from all sectors of Quebec society denounced these actions, especially the late René Lévesque, leader of the Parti Québécois at the time. Making this distinction is important because the individuals who perpetrated the crimes assumed the consequences, were judged, sentenced and have paid their dues to society.

I would first like to demonstrate the impact these incidents, in particular the enforcement of war measures, have had on the lives of many fellow Quebecers and on our collective democracy in general.

In 1970, I was a member of the Parti Québécois, and still am, and back then, I was garnering support in the riding of Frontenac, a rural riding in which Lac-Mégantic was the biggest town at the time. I was working for the Parti Québécois. We had just been through our first election, on April 29, 1970. Please bear in mind that back then being a member of the Parti Québécois was not easy in that kind of a community, a community that I respect and which was adamantly against all "ists": communists, separatists, socialists, péquistes. It was not easy garnering support democratically for the sovereignty cause in such a context.

When Mr. Pierre Laporte was assassinated, it struck a dissonant chord within me, I was bowled over, indignant, frightened.

• (1110)

In my heart of hearts, I did not feel that the cause I was fighting for justified killing a man in order to achieve our goal. Like hundreds of thousands of my fellow citizens, I was and still am convinced that this should be accomplished in a democratic