

Supply

long ago what it would be: "Do Quebecers want Quebec to become a sovereign country?" I think that is very clear.

I will say that when it comes to clear political positions and democracy, Quebec does not have much to learn. I think of the law on party financing; in Quebec, only voters can contribute to political parties, which is not the case here, where unions and big companies can finance parties, like the Liberal Party. So it will be done very democratically, as usual.

Will there be more than one referendum? Look at history. Newfoundland joined Canada after more than one referendum. All Canadians were never asked to vote on whether they would welcome Newfoundland into the federation or not. They recognized Newfoundland's choice and Newfoundlanders made their own decision, just as Quebecers' right to do the same should be recognized.

We are also told that sovereignty is a thing of the past, a nineteenth-century concept. Does that mean for my colleague and for the Liberal Party that Canada's sovereignty is a thing of the past? If having a large unit is important, why not join the United States? Either a line of reasoning is valid or it is not. Personally, I think that Canadian sovereignty is important and that Canada should exist as an independent country, a neighbour of the United States; similarly, if it is important for Canada, I do not see why it could not be so for Quebec, which also has the right to sovereignty, just as Canada has the right to sovereignty.

I am coming to the issue of the right to self-determination. It was recognized by the NDP in the 1960s, by the Conservative Party in 1991 in Toronto and its leader, the Prime Minister, wrote in a book around 1985 that his participation in the 1980 referendum was *de facto* recognition of Quebec's right to self-determination.

I end with a question. The other day, my colleague and I heard Professor Jackson of Carleton tell a House committee that, the way he sees things, Quebec is a nation, even though he is for Canadian unity; he thinks that Diefenbaker was wrong to speak of "one nation" when he should have spoken of "one country".

• (1640)

So, his colleague, who is also a constitutionalist, spoke of the existence of the Quebec nation. I want to ask the hon. member if, as a member of the Liberal Party, which recognizes the First Nations, he recognizes that, like the First Nations, Quebec is a nation too.

This is a question which his colleague for Outremont did not deign answer the other day, for obvious reasons. However, knowing that the member is an honest constitutionalist, I want to know if he indeed considers that Quebec is a nation.

Mr. McWhinney: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question on the referendum question. My comments only applied to the question worded in 1980. There was then a calculated ambiguity which, in my opinion, would not be acceptable today.

On the issue of political party financing, I am in favour of a comprehensive reform of the system.

As regards self-determination, there are many opportunities to exercise that right. Such a right can be exercised within a federal system, as the Yukon natives chose to do.

Mr. Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order and ask for the unanimous consent of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I understand that you rise on a point of order, but we cannot go on and on after each speaker.

Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra to conclude?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Mr. McWhinney: Regarding the last question on sovereignty—

Mr. Duceppe: The nation. Quebec as a nation.

Mr. McWhinney: According to the international law, the right to self-determination is limited to peoples, not to nations. Consequently, as regards peoples, international law does not require any answer for a separation.

Mr. Duceppe: Is Quebec a nation?

Mr. McWhinney: A nation is a group of people, there is no doubt about that. However the term "nation" is not a word—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Order, please. Resuming debate.

[English]

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham): Madam Speaker, I would just like to reiterate that today we have been listening to 19th century nationalism almost continuously all day, and I apologize to some of our viewers. It is another round of constitutional negotiation which I am sure we could do without.

I would also like to mention that we are now dealing with things like the information highway. It is not important whether we connect states, member states of a country together, but we are going to connect households throughout this nation together. French speakers in Quebec and French speakers in the maritimes will be talking to each other. What is the logic of a nation state?

It gives me great pleasure to rise in my place today to discuss the future of Canada. Like so many others here this is why I came to the capital, to try to shape the direction of our great country as we enter the 21st century.