

Oral Questions

means the whole family must be able to discuss their problems.

Yesterday, in this very House, members of the Bloc Québécois wanted to take part in the debate on the motion presented by the New Democratic Party, and we were denied the right to speak directly to the motion. We were only allowed to ask questions but not to speak to the motion as such. Is that Quebec's place within Canada? Is that the kind of respect Canada has for Quebec: Ask questions but don't speak to the motion? Madam Speaker, I should think that in the interests of democracy and out of respect for the rights of all members, you would want to hear what everyone in this House has to say.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of the Environment, I would like to direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. If an agreement on the environment is to be at all useful, it must contain the following: sanctions, enforcement, mechanisms for public scrutiny, independent monitoring mechanisms. My question is this: Can the Deputy Prime Minister give the House the assurance that the air pollution agreement to be signed today meets all these criteria? Can he give us the assurance it will not be just another case of window-dressing, like the Green Plan?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, today is an historic date for Canada. Our Prime Minister and President Bush will be signing an agreement very shortly. We have been discussing these possibilities since 1978, as some of my fellow members who were in the House at the time will remember and others who were not. However, the Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, was the first one to raise this issue, with very substantial support from all concerned, and especially from the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka who, for as long as I have known him, has

worked very hard on this issue, and I want to congratulate all those who have given this matter their support.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[English]

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Madam Speaker, members of the government ought to know that this initiative was begun by my colleague. That is where it started.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Martin: I will say something else. The agreement that this government finally came to is just so much political puffery and so is this minister's answer.

The issue in an international agreement, if the minister does not know, ought to be, how can the citizens of each country be assured that the other country will carry out its terms?

The question I put to the minister is this. Is this agreement enforceable, one country versus the other? If not, of what value is it other than to provide a photo-op for a couple of Tories?

An hon. member: Sour grapes.

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, the policies of his hon. colleagues did little or almost nothing in this area for 20 years.

Some hon. members: Nothing, nothing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Weiner: Today is a day to reflect on achievement and accomplishment, to celebrate what we have been able to do together. A vigorous new partnership has been brought together. Why not congratulate today instead of belittling. Today is a day to reflect on this success.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the agreement is not enforceable; that the agreement is an empty agreement. This is an agreement of absolutely no significance, so let us go on to something that is.

This week the Rawson Academy reported on the secret diversion of water from Saskatchewan to the United States. In the last two months, a number of incidences have been reported of potential exports of water. Let there be no mistake about it. We are dealing with potential precedents under the free trade agreement. The question is when will this government bring forth comprehensive legislation on water exports so that