

Oral Questions

Francophones across Canada, including those in Quebec, feel insulted. As Murray Maltais said in *Le Droit*, referring to the hon. member in question: "She says what she thinks, but she does not always think about what she says".

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[English]

GASTON TREMBLAY

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on October 16 I attended the funeral of a great Canadian, my friend Gaston Tremblay, whom I always knew as Gus, a native of Quebec.

Gus retired to my riding in 1984 after a distinguished career in the RCMP. Gus had a talent for numbers, which he used as an RCMP auditor but also as a volunteer treasurer for many community organizations, including the Royal Canadian Legion and the Reform Party as my official agent during the election campaign. He attained a high rank in the Knights of Columbus and was past president of both the RCMP Veterans Association and Gateby intermediate care facilities.

• (1415)

His talent with numbers gave him special insight regarding our national debt and as treasurer of any group he guarded their every dollar. Gus was a man of passionate convictions. He dearly loved his country and rejected the idea of hyphenated Canadians.

I extend my sympathies to his family members and join them in their grief. Gus Tremblay, my friend, will be sorely missed.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after an urgent appeal from the chair of the No committee, Mr. Daniel Johnson, who asked him to announce his position on the issues of distinct society, veto rights and elimination of overlap, the Prime Minister of Canada, after humiliating his ally, Daniel Johnson, in New York by refusing to do so, finally agreed to issue a joint statement with Mr. Johnson dealing only with distinct society, and I will quote part of the statement:

We remind you that we have both supported the inclusion of this principle in the Canadian Constitution every time Quebec has demanded it.

My question is directed to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. What explanation does the minister have for the fact

that the Prime Minister claims he has always supported the principle of a distinct society every time Quebec has demanded it, although he fought with such tenacity against the Meech Lake Accord which contained a significant definition of distinct society?

The Speaker: My dear colleagues, I would appreciate it if you would make both your questions and your answers a little shorter.

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think if anyone reads the last paragraph of the statement, he will know exactly what the situation is, without the embellishments added by the hon. member for Roberval. I will read the last paragraph of the statement issued jointly by the chair of the No committee and the Prime Minister of Canada:

We state unequivocally that Quebec is a distinct society. We remind you that we have both supported the inclusion of this principle in the Canadian Constitution every time Quebec has demanded it. We have not changed our opinion on this subject and we always maintain our support for this fundamental Canadian reality. We have supported it in the past; we support it today and we will support it in the future, in all circumstances.

This is a clear-cut position; it indicates exactly what the No committee and the Prime Minister of Canada believe.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs acknowledge that when the Prime Minister of Canada says that he has supported in the past, supports today and will support in the future, in all circumstances, the distinct identity of Quebec society, he is referring to the concept of distinct society in the Charlottetown Accord, a concept that was meaningless, being subordinate to the equality of the provinces, a concept that was rejected by Quebecers, and that the Prime Minister has always been opposed to the concept of distinct society as defined in the Meech Lake Accord?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no, and once again we must emphasize that the question on October 30 will be about the separation of Quebec from Canada.

The Bloc Quebecois wants to separate Quebec from Canada. As for Mr. Parizeau, when the distinct society concept was raised with him, his comment was: "I do not give a damn about distinct society, I do not want it". That is what he said. And he is the leader of the Yes committee, while we have always insisted it was possible to be both a Quebecer and a Canadian and that it is in the best interests of Quebecers to remain in Canada in order to make the changes that are needed.