

*Private Members' Business*

perfect opportunity to commemorate the contribution that all great Canadians have made to our history.

Permit me to mention that heritage is a vast concept that includes, as George Kapelos wrote, the understanding, appreciation and preservation of significant elements of our culture and historic heritage. It goes without saying that one of those significant elements is the important role played by the Patriotes and the Reformers of 1837.

It must also be said that the federal government's more traditional role in heritage matters has been to protect national, historic or architectural sites and to establish research programs to increase awareness of our past.

Yet there is ongoing co-operation among the federal, provincial and territorial governments in numerous areas of heritage preservation and appreciation. That is why as an Ontarian and as a Canadian I am pleased to see the Government of Quebec has officially marked the contribution that the Patriotes made to the establishment of more democratic structures by instituting the *journée des Patriotes* celebrated in November of each year.

It is certainly not my intention to discourage the groups of citizens in Quebec and Ontario that are working to ensure the Patriotes and the Reformers are given their rightful place in our collective history. Indeed a familiarity with Canada's history gives us a more balanced vision of the country that allows us to make well advised decisions in managing the present and preparing for the future.

The reason I oppose the adoption of such a bill is that the proposal by the member for Verchères puts the emphasis on the role of only certain individuals in the process that led to the establishment of responsible government. I do not agree with the thinking that the Government of Canada should give all the credit for the progress of democracy in Canada to the Patriotes of the rebellion of 1837. This would be unacceptable given that it would ignore the contributions of thousands of Canadians in every region of the country who played an integral role in establishing a more genuine democracy in Canada.

I must therefore point out, as did my colleague from Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle a few months ago, that the proposal by the member for Verchères does not take into account the contribution that a great number of Canadians made to the institution of responsible government in Canada. I am speaking of Joseph Howe, Nellie McClung, Thérèse Casgrain and many others who over the course of our history were involved in the process of establishing responsible government and in the ongoing evolution of our democratic system of government.

Recalling Joseph Howe, I cannot but question the link that this proposal tries to make between the actions of the Patriotes and the Reformers in the last century and the institution of

responsible government. Was it not in fact Lord Durham who in a the rebellion of 1837 first recommended responsible government and the union of the two Canadas? I will be told that Lord Durham's intention was to assimilate the French Canadians and that is undeniable.

• (1940)

I would point out, however, that it was the moderate Reformers who deserve the credit for putting forward the idea of responsible government. That is why Joseph Howe of Nova Scotia played such a pivotal role. He was the first to establish responsible government overseas in the British Empire, in one of the colonies that was to become Canada, at a time when the Patriot Louis Joseph Papineau was advocating American style elections.

Joseph Howe, Robert Baldwin and Louis Lafontaine then built solid, moderate parties which in 1848 led Great Britain to accept the institution of a fully functional, responsible government. I would also point out that although responsible government did represent progress in Canada's parliamentary system, it was not in the beginning fully democratic.

It would take contributions of such great women as Nellie McClung and Thérèse Casgrain to win the right for women to vote that they were denied until the 20th century. Thus it was Nellie McClung who deserves the credit for Manitoba becoming the first Canadian province to give women the right to vote in 1916. Quebec had to wait for Thérèse Casgrain before it recognized women's right to vote in provincial elections. Furthermore it was not until 1960 that status Indians were allowed to vote in federal elections.

If Canada were to mark the contribution its citizens have made to the institution of genuine responsible government, it would do so by including all Canadians rather than singling out the Patriotes. I find it difficult to see how Canadians as a whole would welcome the idea of granting national recognition to only one of the elements that contributed to an immense collection of movement leading to the creation of real democracy.

I find it difficult to see how women would once again endorse a version of history that denies them their rightful place. I found it difficult to see how Canadians in provinces other than Ontario and Quebec would accept the government's decision to celebrate the contribution of only certain patriots. I find it difficult to see how the First Nations would welcome such a denial of their role in the creation of Canadian democracy.

In as much as adoption of the bill might incur additional expenses, I feel it must not proceed. The Canadian government is a responsible government because of the historical events that created it. As a result it has priorities to which it must devote all its efforts and its human and financial resources.