

● (1540)

[English]

It is written right in the law that Radio Canada and CBC have a clear mandate from Parliament to foster national unity, therefore if when it comes that there is a question of the referendum, I don't want to see Radio Canada on the fence presenting as a neutral body the two sides. I think mostly, that they should not present the other side. I think it would be unfair to chuck them out and refuse them (*sic*) to present the other side, but as an instrument of Canadian unity with a mandate to foster Canadian unity, I believe that . . . Radio Canada . . . should be promoting Canadian unity and being (*sic*) on the side of those who want this country united—

It seems pretty clear that the minister and his colleagues are applying whatever legal weight attaches to the parliamentary mandate given the CBC, plus their own moral suasion, if I can call it that, to try and influence the professional news coverage and editorial judgment of the journalists and producers employed by Radio Canada and the CBC.

[Translation]

On the eve of the Quebec referendum, it seems that Mr. Ouellet and his federal Liberal colleague are preparing a replay of the campaign of political intimidation against the management and reporters of Radio-Canada.

Senator Asselin: It is not true?

Senator Goldenberg: No, it is not true.

Senator Asselin: No. So you are saying the opposite of what Mr. Ouellet said.

Senator Murray: So I for one would not be surprised if last week, because of his excessive language, the minister had swung more new votes over to the yes side than René Lévesque. In any case, we consider any political interference with the freedom of speech or the freedom of the press as more detrimental to Canadian values than an independentist movement could be.

Honourable senators, with respect to the state of our federation, the Speech from the Throne makes an analysis with which I find myself in deep disagreement. It paints a dark, even alarmist picture of the attitudes in the different regions and provinces of Canada. The writers of the Speech from the Throne do not find anything positive in the economic, social and cultural aspirations of our regions. They warn us against the enticement of regional isolationism. They see divisive forces everywhere in this country. They claim the Canadian tradition of sharing is being challenged. Wherever they look, they see only quarrels, feelings of envy and bitterness, recriminations, and we are called upon to check the forces of disintegration which, if we believe the Speech from the Throne, exist in all areas of this country.

The Canada that is described in the Speech from the Throne, that Canada that is supposedly being assailed by the forces of disintegration in all regions, I must say that is not the Canada I know. Of course, there are very serious disagreements in federal-provincial as well as interprovincial relations.

There will always be difficult problems to solve in our federation, but I repeat, the depressing and pessimistic picture painted by the Speech from the Throne is not a true picture of what Canada is today.

The Prime Minister of Canada in his first statement in this parliamentary session indulged in an equally pessimistic analysis of the attitudes of Canadians.

[English]

The Prime Minister spoke of "the enemy within". He spoke of Canadians acting as though the language and culture of other Canadians was a threat to them. He spoke of Canadians slamming the door, one in the face of the other. The Prime Minister is wrong in describing those attitudes as if they reflected the state of affairs generally across the country. It is a distorted picture he gives of the country, especially when he says not a word about the progress that has been made, or about the willingness of virtually every other province to proceed with constitutional reform; not a word about the fact that he has had a letter on his desk since 1977 from the Premier of Ontario proposing that education rights in both languages in that province and across the country be guaranteed in the Constitution; not a word about the fact that for 10 years or more New Brunswick has sought to have its official languages act effectively entrenched; not a word about the tens of thousands of ordinary Canadians who are trying, through various spontaneous or voluntary efforts, to send a message to Quebec to stay. The Prime Minister's description of a Canada everywhere selfish and divided is inaccurate, and does a disservice to Canada. That kind of unfair caricature of Canadian attitudes can only reinforce the false arguments of those in Quebec or elsewhere who think and say that national unity in Canada is impossible.

● (1550)

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister says that the enemy within "is when loyalties are no longer to the whole, but there is a conflict of loyalties, when we seek protection of our wealth, our rights or our language not in the whole country, but in a region or province of that country." The tug between regional identity and loyalty to the nation has existed since the beginning in this country, and we have managed, from the beginning, to harmonize and reconcile those forces that tug at each of us personally and are reflected in our institutions.

I read the news reports on the recent C.D. Howe Institute study, and I have heard what the western premiers have been saying and, in fact, said only the other day about their dissatisfaction with the status quo and their determination to have changes made. However, none of that warrants the almost apocalyptic vision that has been conjured up for us by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister recently, nor does it warrant his very mistaken admonition to parliamentarians, when he said:

—when we disagree, that that disagreement not be based on regional interests, on the fact that it might be the duty of provincial governments to serve, but be based on the