

The Address—Mr. Chretien

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the present separatist movement is not serious. On the other hand, I feel that at the last federal election, the people of Quebec showed their trust in the party that has always recognized the importance of the French Canadians. That explains why so many ridings in Quebec have elected Liberals to represent them in this house, even though no expert could have forecast a Liberal victory in that province. It must be admitted that Quebec, in these times of confusion, has put her trust in the Liberal party, and it is the Liberal party which will restore a climate of confidence in the province of Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, may I call it one o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair.

At one o'clock the house took recess.

(Text):

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at 2.30 p.m.

(Translation):

Mr. Chretien: Mr. Speaker, allow me to go back briefly over some things I said this morning.

This morning I was saying that at the present time, in the province of Quebec, a peaceful revolution was being carried out by the new government. I feel it is proceeding to the satisfaction of the people of Quebec. There is no reason to worry about the events reported these days in the newspapers, because on April 8 our people gave themselves an adequate representation in the federal government, that is a Liberal representation. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, to give hope to those thousands of young French Canadians who are now attending university and tomorrow will be out on the labour market, I believe the federal government should pass adequate legislation. It will have to recognize the existence of the province of Quebec, which may wish to be more independent from confederation than in the past. So the government of our province must be given the means to solve its own problems. The federal government will have to adopt laws on biculturalism that are adequate and recognize, on a national scale, that during the next hundred years, Canada will be different from the United States, a country where there are two languages and two cultures.

I feel that under the present Prime Minister the government is going in that direction and I urge it to keep on going along that same path.

It will also have to study the sharing of taxes. The government of Quebec and the other provincial governments must be given sufficient financial resources to solve the numerous economic and educational problems that exist today, especially in the province of Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, I feel it is the duty of this house to give the country progressive legislation. The people of Canada will find in the Liberal program the solution to their problems.

The solutions that we have put forward shall have to be applied rapidly and, in this regard, I have a suggestion to make. I believe hon. members should be given the opportunity to take a more active part in this task, by changing the procedure of committees, so that members can really go to the root of problems and offer possible solutions. Committees should be diversified and the most competent people in this house should be appointed to work on each problem and submit solutions to the government and then adequate legislation could be enacted.

Mr. Speaker, some newspapers said that the member for St. Maurice-Lafleche perhaps had gone against his own way of thinking by supporting the government when the vote was taken on a non-confidence motion proposed by the New Democratic party. During the campaign, I took a position by saying that I was against nuclear arms but that if Canada had been committed by the Conservative government to acquire them, I did not want the Liberal government to fail to respect those commitments, or to do in public life what we do not do in private life.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told us that this question would be discussed in the house in due course; he promised us that we would have an opportunity to discuss it. We only had half a day to deal with this problem and we were called to vote that same evening without having received all the information to which we were entitled.

I believe that problem is important, and the Prime Minister undertook to give us an opportunity for a full debate, not only an afternoon sitting. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I voted with the government.