

*Government Orders*

I do not think the Prime Minister of Canada would go to Vancouver and say: "Do not leave Canada; if you leave Canada, the country will no longer exist." But this is what happened yesterday. The Prime Minister of Canada said that Canada would cease to exist if Quebec left. Is Canada only Ontario and Quebec? This is what we will end up thinking. It is as if this were 1840 and Canada were Lower and Upper Canada—joined later by other provinces and territories—but they remained the heart of the country. Ontario and Quebec form the heart of Canada, why, because they are the two biggest markets?

Certainly, with today's mentality, that is what those opposite will have us believe. Is it not, rather, that Canada at the outset was Ontario and Quebec, because Ontario was English Canadian and Quebec was French Canadian, and each country had minorities, official language minorities different from the majority. That was Canada.

Canada did what it could for minorities. Look at Quebec, there is a very strong English Canadian minority that has its universities, its school boards, its hospitals, its representatives in major institutions. I would like to be able to say the same of our Franco-Ontarian and Franco-Manitoban friends who had to fight for their schools, and who still have to fight for their schools, and for control over them. They are not fighting for control over universities, they are fighting for control over elementary schools and high schools, because that is where assimilation occurs.

We challenged, two days ago, statistics stating that there were a million francophones outside Quebec in Canada. We said that, out of the one million Canadians outside Quebec who claim French as their mother tongue, 650 speak French at home. We did not mean any disrespect to our Franco-Ontarian and Franco-Manitoban friends or our friends in the Yukon or the Northwest Territories. We just wanted to say how sad we were to see the French language die out outside Quebec. What we intend to achieve among other things through sovereignty, besides allowing Quebec to develop with its best interests in mind, is to ensure, through our own institutions, that French will still be spoken in America in a hundred years and that a French or Quebec culture will still be alive in Quebec at that time.

That is what we want to do. We want to live on without constantly having to protest, like our friends opposite do, just to survive. It is important to be able to survive. But we think that there are enough of us, and that we have enough education, enough capital, enough stamina, and enough willpower to do better than survive.

When I was in grade school, money was collected throughout the Quebec school system, a dime at a time, for the survival of the French language in Canada. Grade school children gave money for use in Manitoba and Ontario. This was fine. But look

at where they now stand. It is sad in a sense to think that there are only 640 of them across Canada, including Acadians.

• (1335)

It is most unfortunate, but as a francophone and a Quebecer or a French Canadian living in Quebec who calls himself a Quebecer, I do not want anything to do with a system that will lead, fifty years from now, to a situation where we have a nice official languages act and many officially bilingual institutions, but where French will no longer be a living language in Quebec.

People can say we are spiteful, I say that we are just stating the facts. The fact is that Canada started off as a bicultural country, a bilingual country, where you had French and English Canadians. The very reason there is panic in some political back rooms is that, yes indeed, this is what Canada was initially.

The Prime Minister said so: "If Quebec goes, that is it for Canada". Look, this is a basic issue. What is Quebec? It is not an economy; it is a culture, and a language. With this culture and language gone, Canada as we know it will no longer exist. This means that we have reached the bottom line.

Canada is more than a checkerboard with ten squares representing each of the ten provinces and that we call Canada. Try as we may, and Reformers will insist that that is Canada and that each little square should be assigned the same number of senators and the same responsibilities, we have to admit that this view of Canada does not agree with reality.

Initially, the real Canada was made up of French Canadians and English Canadians. French Canadians did not benefit from this agreement. And French Canadians in Quebec who are now called Quebecers decided to withdraw from the agreement, to declare themselves sovereign, that is to say, in control of their laws, taxes and treaties, and then to propose a partnership treaty with English Canada.

English Canada likes us so much that it is threatening to cut us off. It is so pleasant to stay in a country like this one. They like us so much that instead of telling us, "Stay with us and everything will be fine", they say, "If you vote Yes, we will cut you off; if you vote No, nothing will happen and you will stay the way you are now".

It is over for French Canadians in Quebec who are now called Quebecers, and I hope that, on October 30, these Quebecers will be able to sign treaties such as this one, agreements with other countries, so that they can benefit from international trade and eventually have access to the economic instruments they need to remain what they are, a French speaking people with their own culture in North America. This is my dearest wish and I think that the people of Quebec will listen to our proposal and vote Yes on October 30.