

Supply

With regard to the hon. member's other point about the shoreline of the north shore of the St. Lawrence, it is a fact that that is what Quebec would have. It is far better to recognize the facts and call them for what they are than to pussyfoot around and let the people of Quebec or the 54 MPs from Quebec who advocate separation push the Liberals around.

• (1350)

They have been pushed around for so long that we have found ourselves in the situation where our country is at risk. Let us recognize the problem, deal with it aggressively and solve it once and for all.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, I did not intervene immediately for a very good reason; I wanted to hear the comments from both sides on the speech the Reform Party member just made. I think members interpret in various ways and disparage the reason why there are 54 members of the Bloc Québécois in this House. I believe that some members live in a hothouse, totally disconnected from reality.

I would like to ask the Reform Party, and particularly the member who just spoke, where they were at the time of the Meech Lake Agreement and of the Charlottetown Agreement, when English Canada twice said no to Quebec. Where were they then? Maybe they will understand the reason for the Bloc Québécois being present in this House, they will understand why 54 out of 75 members are here to defend Quebec's interests, to advocate and promote Quebec sovereignty.

Since we are drifting slightly away from the Reform Party's motion on bilingualism, it is easy to present various ideas and explanations, but in the member's speech, I never understood, I never saw any concrete measures—we are talking here about Quebec separating from Canada and I think both sides are speaking as if it were a fact, as if Quebec were separated already; but what are you going to do with the francophones? I understand the Reform Party members when they say that they will welcome everybody and treat all minorities very well. But they never made any concrete suggestions. What exact measures will the Reform Party put into place for francophones outside Quebec when Quebec becomes sovereign?

[English]

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, the question deserves one answer. We are working very hard to keep Quebec in Canada. We are proposing a new way of handling the official languages in this country. That will ensure that there is French available for Canadians coast to coast for the people who wish to speak in the French language.

That can be done best by ensuring that everybody, including the 54 Bloc Québécois MPs who want to work for the benefit of their constituents, has an opportunity to work and communicate

in the language of their choice in this great country called Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: The time is up for questions and comments. Resuming debate. I believe the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage intends to divide her time.

[Translation]

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party has put before the House today a motion asking the government to amend the Official Languages Act so that French can be the predominant language in Quebec and English the predominant language in the rest of the country. Reformers also want federal services to be available in the official language of the minority where there is significant demand.

Obviously, the motion was drafted by someone who does not understand the Official Languages Act very well or by someone who wants to give a distorted image of the letter and the spirit of the Act.

[English]

Who could deny within the Reform Party or elsewhere that French is the predominant language of Quebec? Who could deny that English is the predominant language of British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario or Newfoundland?

Not only does the Official Languages Act do nothing to change that, it recognizes it. It recognizes it by ensuring that official language minorities have access to federal government services where there is significant demand. This is much of what the motion asks and it is what the act already does. What is new? Perhaps it is only a new attempt to foster resentment and discontent among Canadians.

I would advise the hon. members of the Reform Party to get better acquainted with the official languages policy if they are interested in meaningful debate based on facts, not simply rumours or misconceptions. Perhaps they might read the brochure "Myths and Realities" to see whether they are on the side of myths or realities. Maybe then they will stop fighting windmills and join with the government in tackling the real problems of this country.

• (1355)

[Translation]

The position taken by the Reform Party on the issue of official languages more than proves they do not understand a thing about government policy. It shows that they do not understand what Canadian identity is all about. We know that the members of the Bloc Québécois want to break up Canada and ensure Quebec's separation. That is very clear. The Bloc deals with its own contradictions as it sees fit, but its basic option is without any ambiguity whatsoever.