

Private Members' Business

Roux and the anglophones who claim that Quebec nationalism is unhealthy should be reminded of that.

Everyone agrees now that the War Measures Act denied the most fundamental rights to hundreds of Quebecers. Take for example the arbitrary arrest of these individuals by police bursting into their homes, arresting them without a warrant and detaining them for several days, and even weeks in some cases, without even allowing their families to be informed.

I am not denying that this was an extremely volatile situation, but the measures taken were far too extreme. Did our so-called civilized society not assume, for a short while, the likeness of a dictatorship? I would have so much to say, but I know that a strict count of time is kept. Let me just say that, for these 32,000 searches, Quebecers are entitled if not to financial compensation, at least to an apology. It is the least once can expect.

Apologies have been made to the Italians, the Japanese, the Chinese. It seems to me that apologies should also be made to every francophone in Canada, and more particularly to those in Quebec, for blunders such as the one made in 1970.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to discuss this motion asking the federal government to make an apology to those who, let us not forget, were the victims of arbitrary arrest and unjustified detention. No charges were ever laid against these people. The government ordered that these people be arrested and long searches were conducted to see if there were any grounds to lay charges. No charges were laid because no such grounds existed. People were arrested based on claims, without any regard for the habeas corpus procedure.

Let me tell you an anecdote. In 1970, I was a student at the Saint-Augustin seminary, in Cap-Rouge. I was a member of the Parti Québécois, and so was my roommate. The evening that Mr. Laporte died, my roommate tore up his PQ membership card. I kept mine, and we debated an issue which is still topical today, namely that the federal government of the time used the reprehensible actions of the FLQ to kill the sovereignist movement. The real aim of the operation was to kill the sovereignist movement.

• (1155)

Because of adverse propaganda, membership in the Parti Québécois dropped significantly. However, Quebecers also learned a lesson from this episode, a lesson which they will remember for a long time: Quebecers opted for democracy. In fact, that choice had been made long before, since Quebec has the oldest parliamentary institution in North America, as well as an appropriate motto which says "Je me souviens". We are patient; we are prepared to wait, but we will reach our ultimate objective, which is Quebec's sovereignty.

In all its efforts to kill that project, the federal government only succeeded in attacking the will of Quebecers to reach their objective not by resorting to violence, but through democratic means, and they will succeed.

The hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead referred to Mr. Gérald Godin, who was arrested in 1970. The best proof that Quebecers did learn their lesson is that, in the 1976 election, the same person beat Robert Bourassa, who was then the federalist on duty. Quebec's long march toward sovereignty is based on respect for democracy. The events of those days had consequences which can still be felt. The federal government's constant attempts to instill fear in Quebecers have their roots in the actions taken then, and perhaps also in the events which occurred with the patriots, back in 1837. They are always trying to rekindle this fear.

No one among the federalists in Quebec is selling Canada as an option for the future. They are only attacking the other option, as if it was always necessary to come back to the same arguments: "Things will not go well, because the sovereignists do not want a bright future for Quebec." This is in line with the oath taken by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1970 to rekindle fear, to ensure that one can, in a roundabout way, either as Minister of Justice or as prime minister, achieve the same results.

During the October crisis, when Mr. Trudeau went on national television to make a statement on the kidnappings, he said: "Next time it could be the manager of a credit union." This was a demagogic way to say that the FLQ was such a well-organized group that it could strike almost anywhere in Quebec, but now we know that some of the FLQ cells were backed by the RCMP. This makes it a planned strategy to kill the sovereignist movement.

What we can say today is that the sovereignist movement will not die, it is here to stay. We have been using all the democratic tools at our disposal since then. We have elected the Parti Québécois, as well as the newest offspring of our movement, the Bloc Québécois, which is here to represent a very strong and very clear movement in Canada. It is obvious that as long as the Constitutional crisis in Canada is not settled, we will remain here, because we have a good memory and we will keep on using existing democratic tools. This is how we have decided to carve out a place in the sun for ourselves, and this is what we will do in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it would be nice for those who were illegally arrested and who were never sent to trial to get an apology, because their rights were indeed violated. The purpose of the motion before us is also to send a message to Quebecers and Canadians of the future, to my children, to your children, to all young people who are growing up in our society, that when errors are made in the system, when the system forgets