

*Government Orders*

I felt obliged to remind the House that this minimum fell far short of the kind of recognition the people of Quebec could expect. I recalled that, in 1965, the man who became Premier of Quebec in 1966 published his book *Égalité ou Indépendance*. This was Daniel Johnson, father of the Leader of the Official Opposition in Quebec, whose own father was an Irish immigrant and did not speak French. Daniel Johnson, born of an Irish father and an Irish mother who settled in Quebec, became the Premier of Quebec, and it was this man who, after having been a member and a minister, gave his party a fresh start when he said: "The French Canadian nation must have equality within Canada, otherwise, it will be perfectly legitimate to look for ways to make Quebec a full-fledged State".

After pointing out that the French Canadian nation was open to all and that, when people came from another country, they could choose to become part of it as they could choose to be English Canadians, he concluded: "I will explain why and how French Canadians are trying to identify with the State of Quebec, the only one where they can claim to be masters of their own destiny and can use to achieve the full potential of their community, while the English Canadian nation tends to make Ottawa the centre of its community life".

This text was a milestone in our history, in the history of Quebec and Canada. Since that time, Quebecers no longer refer to themselves as French Canadians—people do in the rest of Canada and, as you know, we are very proud of what has been achieved by French Canadians outside Quebec who are coping under extremely difficult situations. But in Quebec, we now call ourselves Quebecois and the vast majority of the population identifies itself as such.

Electoral boundaries readjustment is an opportunity to consider that the Quebec people have a right to minimum recognition, whatever their choice will be, and based on the historical importance of Quebec, Canada should support this principle.

If the rest of Canada had only given some indication that it was prepared to recognize the Quebec people, our recent history would have been quite different. If we go back to the minimum demands made by Premier Bourassa during the talks on Meech Lake and if we go back to the rejection of the Charlottetown accord, we find the same desire for minimum recognition, and the position that the Quebec people are entitled to certain guarantees.

• (1205)

However, in recent history—let us say, until the 1960s—it was equality that the people of Quebec sought. There were others, besides Daniel Johnson. There was also, it will be remembered, André Laurendeau, who was appointed by the Prime Minister of the time, Lester B. Pearson, to head the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. André Laurendeau also desperately sought equality from coast to coast, with

the focus on Quebec naturally, for the French Canadian nation, for the Quebecers of his time, as other French Canadians regularly did in this period of history.

André Laurendeau tried to convince Canadians. He succeeded in convincing many of the commissioners working with him. Unfortunately, he failed to convince Prime Minister Trudeau, who could have implemented the recommendations of the report, which, like many others, ended up on the shelf.

This episode, like a lot of others, reminds us that, for Quebecers, who have the possibility of a different future, the choice offered by Canada has always been: "Be a province like the rest or else".

The reality of history is that, once again, it was not the French Canadians nor the Quebecers who did not want to build a Canada which included not only an adequate but an appropriate place for Quebec. Why? Some accuse us of focussing on the past; the truth is the opposite. Why do they not level the same accusation at those who refused to accord Quebec a real place? Why did they refuse to do so? Perhaps they refused because the French colonists were from France, and France had been conquered and had decided to give up in the war in the colony. Are they not the ones who continue to treat the descendants of the French colonists not as French stock but as a conquered people? Otherwise, they would recognize what the world recognizes: that all the characteristics of a nation and of a people may be found here, in this land.

Any dictionary definition of the words people and nation fits those living in the territory of Quebec like a glove. We are a people; we are a nation. If the rest of Canada had not been focussed on the past and had really wanted to build a new country, it would have acknowledged this, because what counts for Quebecers and Canadians is building a future.

• (1210)

We must give ourselves the means to ensure the survival of our people and their cultural, social and economic development in the future. It is essential that Quebec develop its people, its culture and its economy according to its own dynamics and identity.

That is why the majority of Quebecers will opt for sovereignty. It must be noted that, for many of them, it will not be the first choice because Quebecers, who used to be called Canadiens or "Canayens", feel at home throughout the land but had to confine themselves to Quebec, where they could develop, as Daniel Johnson, Sr. used to say. In fact, it is important to realize the extent to which the first French Canadians were scattered throughout the territory, and the evidence is still there.

It is also important to realize that French Canadian women, who had the highest birth rate in North America between 1870 and 1960, saw, with breaking hearts, their children and young families leave for the United States. This is not very well known, but, for over 100 years, 10,000 French Canadians left every year