

Government Orders

system even more inflexible by taking the dangerous step of protecting the status quo at his own risk.

• (1605)

In reality, Bill C-110 is intended solely to convince Quebecers that the Prime Minister is making good on his referendum promises. No one in Quebec will be taken in, as recent surveys prove quite well.

Half of Quebecers opted for sovereignty-partnership and the rest, the majority, pinned their hopes on renewed federalism, but the bogus veto proposed by the Minister of Justice will not satisfy even his erstwhile referendum allies who, let us keep in mind, have always called for a constitutional veto for Quebec.

[English]

The federal government "knows best" attitude has been, is and will remain totally counter productive in this country.

[Translation]

During the debates on this bill this House has had a chance to appreciate the Prime Minister's talent for improvisation—I have chosen that term deliberately—in para-constitutional matters, by granting the province of British Columbia its own veto. But we must be well aware that adding to the number of vetoes ends up watering down their value, by diminishing the concept and thus its effect as well.

It must be realized that, although having a veto reassures each veto holder that Canada could not go against its interests constitutionally, this does not in any way make it possible for a province to go where its interests dictate. In short, it is our feeling that not only does the formula proposed by the Minister of Justice run contrary to the higher interests of Quebec, it is also contrary to the higher interests of Canada. For this reason, I and the Bloc Quebecois will be opposing passage of this bill, in accordance with the convictions of the large majority of Quebecers.

[English]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to commence my speech today on behalf of the Reform Party with regard to Bill C-110 by speaking about the attitude there seems to be on the part of people in the government.

This attitude is led by none other than the Prime Minister. People in the House have learned, they have listened and understand well. The attitude is that if there is vacuousness, in other words, nothing to talk about and nothing to offer, then attack the other person's motive.

I was deeply dismayed yesterday and I quote the Prime Minister when he said: "There has not been one day since we have been talking about this problem that he"—referring to the leader of the Reform Party—"has not been in bed with the Quebec separatists. There has not been one day he does not want to try to make life difficult for a government that is trying to save Canada. There has not been one day that he is not causing some disturbance in Canada because he has no interest in keeping the country together".

I find that kind of personal attack beneath the dignity of the person who has the title of Prime Minister of Canada. It is exceptionally unfortunate that he is setting that kind of tone for the people in his party when he has absolutely no content, no idea of what he is doing. He is running this country from the back of an envelope. He attacks the motives of the leader of this party or anyone else who does not go along with his flavour of the day.

• (1610)

His flavour of the day apparently has now changed and we are going to have a veto for the province of B.C. While there are few things said by the Bloc Quebecois I agree with, I agree with the last speaker that this veto for the province of B.C. is nothing more than an additional piece of chewing gum to add to the chewing gum and baling wire that has been used to put together this concocted Bill C-110 in the first place.

How did we get there? Contrary to the remarks of the Deputy Prime Minister who apparently has taken the comments and the direction of the Prime Minister to heart to the point of ending up in tears here in the House of Commons, contrary to her point of view and the way in which she chooses to express it, there are people in Canada, including members of the Reform Party, who are avowed federalists and believe in the concept of keeping this great nation together. The chewing gum and baling wire effort at this point is so absolutely and abjectly inadequate as to make my stomach turn.

Why do we have this bill? It is, first, because the Prime Minister panicked. Obviously the "don't worry, be happy" attitude he had when he came to British Columbia saying everything is fine, did not work. "I am really pleased that nobody in British Columbia, nobody in the west, has been panicking over the fact that we have not really been running in this referendum debate. It is really nice that you have not been running and creating any problems, therefore don't worry, be happy".

That was approximately two weeks before October 30 when the first string quarterback, Jacques Parizeau, decided to replace himself with a backup quarterback, the leader of Her Majesty's official loyal opposition as the person who was going to lead the province of Quebec out of Canada.