

Government Orders

I also reminded this House that the existential questions of English Canada in no way concern the Quebecois and even harm the development of Quebec. We can only hope that English Canada can solve its existential problems for the good of our nations. Thus, the decision was made very unilaterally to spend huge amounts on the search for this elusive Canadian identity that supposedly supersedes the Quebec identity, which is very much alive.

• (1605)

In the same vein, I mentioned the harmful effects of the federal government's immense spending power. For example, in the referendum debate which is now just getting under way, we can already see the real impact of this spending power on the form and direction that the debate will take. For the sake of Canadian identity and its promotion, as provided for in clauses 4 and 5 of the bill, the federal government will subsidize various groups and organizations to defend the "no" option, directly contravening the spirit of the Quebec law on referendums.

The newspapers told us again yesterday that the Council for Canadian Unity was setting up three organizations for the Quebec referendum. One of the means being used is the Terry Fox Centre, financed—you guessed it—with federal funds. This is just the beginning of federal money being wasted in provincial jurisdictions.

Experience in Quebec has taught us that these well-financed groups will grow rapidly in the coming weeks. As I already said, all this is contrary to the spirit of the Quebec law. This shows how much consideration the federal system has for Quebec's distinct character. In my first speech, I mentioned that it is important for the development of Quebec culture that the Quebec government control this whole area.

Does the federal government care about this? Not in the least. With this bill, they are getting ready for a systematic invasion of all cultural areas, including the arts, the status of the artist, cultural heritage and industries, conservation, exportation and importation of cultural property.

I remind you that the federal government's cultural investments will amount to almost \$1 billion a year in Quebec. That is what I mean when I say that the federal government's spending power is harmful to Quebec. I put forward these arguments only two weeks ago. Since then, new elements have confirmed how important it is to reject the Canadian heritage minister's bill.

First of all, we realized that the Minister of Canadian Heritage sees no limit to his power to take action. That in itself is very disturbing. We may well wonder how far the government would be willing to go if it felt that the Canadian identity was threatened. Would it be tempted to spend the money allocated to

the Department of Canadian Heritage and to other departmental programs on promotion, without wondering at all if it is a legitimate investment?

The Minister of International Affairs is about to promote Canadian culture through his foreign embassies and his cultural centre in Paris, which, incidentally, the Conservatives wanted to close. The evidence given at the hearings of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage raises similar questions. The mandate of the CBC seems to throw the door wide open to an extensive promotion of the Canadian identity. Curiously, except for one or two well-known exceptions, after two months of sittings, nothing has been said yet about Quebec culture.

Is it necessary to specify that the vast majority of those who watch national television live in Quebec? What culture other than Quebec culture are they trying to reflect? Another element to be considered is the central government's attitude towards the new Quebec government's legitimate practices. Following an old tradition, the Parizeau government is working to revitalize the relationship with France and promote Quebec products in that country.

As we know, Quebec has felt for a long time that it enjoys exclusive educational and cultural powers at the international level. Cultural products are an important part of these international exchanges. How can Quebec protect and promote its culture, when the central government is making laws such as the bill before us today that would give it control over Quebec culture, which is unacceptable?

• (1610)

Once again, Quebec's specificity and autonomy are being denied. The right to control Quebec's culture belongs to the Quebec government, not to a government controlled by a majority representing English Canada. This is not a whim: It is a necessity. In fact, this is what the Bloc Quebecois reaffirmed in its dissenting opinion on the report tabled yesterday on Canadian foreign policy:

Successive Quebec governments have always rejected this argument of indivisibility and developed distinct international policies and relations that aim to serve Quebec's national interests and promote its influence and development, particularly in commercial, cultural, economic, political and social fields.

Since she was sworn in, the new Quebec Minister of Culture and Communications has been asking for the patriation of Quebec's control over the electronic highway and communications, which is essential to the development of Quebec's culture. In so doing, the minister reflects the collective will of Quebecers.

It is imperative that the federal government withdraw from Quebec's cultural sector and that it gives fair compensation to the Quebec government. For all these reasons, we oppose Bill C-53.