

those voiced by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) with respect to Mr. Biron. She had to recant but this is the type of statement that was made. However, I would like to congratulate the Minister of State for Small Businesses and hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Lapointe) who, in my opinion, has made a very relevant statement and intelligent and interesting remarks for the whole of Quebec.

Instead of viewing regionalism and the love felt by Canadians for their local areas as obstacles to Canadian unity, the right hon. Prime Minister should see them as valuable tools in the forging of a strong and diversified Canadian identity, as the required cement in the building of a common motherland. Instead of reviling the remarks of the Leader of the Official Opposition, he should use them, he should apply them. This would help reduce the tensions flared up by his calls for a form of centralist federalism that is counterproductive to his avowed aims and that up until now only caused suspicion, division and alienation.

The right hon. Prime Minister may very artfully refer to the dilemma in which the Lévesque government entrapped itself with its question. He may very well nonsuit any discussions were the Yes choice to win the referendum on May 20. He may very well enjoy the applause drawn by the logic of his attacks at the monstrous duplicity of the Lévesque government. But if the Yes choice wins the vote, which the Prime Minister already recognized as possible, there will nevertheless have to be discussions with Quebec authorities, if only to prevent the political impasse from leading to oral and even physical violence.

Whatever the right hon. Prime Minister may think, it will not only be a matter of saying Yes or No and laugh it off. He will have not only to play a tight game but to raise himself to the level of higher politics to prevent ultimate disaster. I have no illusions either on this government's real intentions relative to constitutional reform. Because two weeks from Friday last, the right hon. Prime Minister still refused to show his true colours. The throne speech deals at length with the Quebec referendum. It says that a No answer to Mr. Lévesque's plea will be interpreted by his government as a Yes vote for a renewed federalism. However, the declaration gives very scant details on where the government's constitutional policy is going.

Bearing the past in mind, as well as the unspoken threats contained in the Speech from the Throne, we are entitled to believe that the Leader of the Government is not interested at all in revamping the constitution in order to make room for a greater decentralization of power and for a more effective participation of the provinces in the development and the implementation of national policies. It is extremely strange to note that the government—after having spent millions of dollars to finance the study by the Pepin-Robarts task force—has not said one word of congratulation for the work accomplished by that team which it had insisted on choosing scrupulously. We notice the same contemptuous silence relating to

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the beige paper published by the Quebec Liberal Federation. Quite the opposite, the Prime Minister and his colleagues are openly hostile toward the reforms advocated in either of these two documents.

In order to make sure that the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton (Mr. Pepin) will not be the source of any trouble to him any more by holding him responsible for that malaise, the Prime Minister simply put a gag in his mouth by appointing him Minister of Transport. This is why the former co-chairman of the Task Force on National Unity remains so quiet in this debate triggered by the Quebec referendum. The minister simply decided to hide his report and to follow blindly a ministerial team whose goal is to maintain the status quo.

That is why I am positively skeptical about the will expressed by the Prime Minister to reform our constitution, Mr. Speaker. I am convinced that it is not from him that we can expect the constitutional changes which will likely bring back harmony and equilibrium between the various parts of our country. Of course, I will vote No in the referendum, but certainly not because I will have been mesmerized by the mermaid's song with which the government is trying to dull public opinion. I will vote No on May 20 because I believe in Canada and because I consider the federal system as most likely to help every Quebecker fulfil all his or her dynamic aspirations, something which the people of Quebec will not be able to do by endlessly sticking to the same old grievances, legitimate though they may be.

When voting No on May 20, I certainly will not do so to support the kind of federalism advocated and practiced by the present government. I will do so in spite of this kind of federalism, Mr. Speaker, and because I know that some day this ill-fated government will be gone and all Canadians will then have the opportunity to start over again building our country in the respect of local loyalties and by virtue of the partnership advocated by my party between provincial and federal governments.

Before casting my No ballot, I want to remind the Prime Minister that I have no confidence at all in him being able to unite this country, I do not trust the legal subtleties he uses in an effort to justify his control over the resources and jurisdictions of the provinces. I will not believe that the man who has brought about so much division around him is now capable of achieving unity around policies that are acceptable for all. I refuse to put the reconstruction of this country into the hands of this demolition contractor. However, I still call upon Mr. Lévesque and urge him to use his huge talent—and I reckon Mr. Ryan is equally talented—to build, together with our fellow Canadians from other provinces, a federation which will measure up to the dream of equality and fraternity envisioned by the people of Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, we are given the opportunity during this pre-referendum period to study its implications and real meaning. It is a fundamental step we must take, as much for the sake of the survival of Canada as that of the fulfilment of