

Government Orders

becomes sovereign, do not expect us to stay here: we will move back to Canada”.

Over the last 30 or 35 years, Quebec developed industrial structures and trade policies which will enable it to join the countries which I mentioned earlier. We rank 16th in terms of the GDP. This is quite something. Quebec is part of Canada. Our friends across the floor say: “Quebec is part of Canada. If you leave Canada, you will become poor, while Canada will keep on being rich”.

• (1325)

That is all very fine, but the wealth of Quebec and the wealth of Canada are similar in terms of domestic product. Quebec sovereignty does not take our engineers from us. Quebec sovereignty does not take our capital from us. Quebec sovereignty does not take our administrators, our poets; it takes nothing from us.

Quebec sovereignty gives us additional powers in terms of laws, gives us additional powers in terms of treaties we can negotiate. Treaties like those Canada has with 55 countries, we will have too. We will have them because we have something to offer. There are people in those countries who may come to invest in Quebec and people in Quebec who may go and invest there. We will be able to have as many treaties as you have managed to have.

That is why it is most appropriate to bring up the case of Quebec in my intervention concerning Bill C-105, for it shows us that it is completely normal for the Government of Canada to have treaties with Latvia, with Estonia, with Trinidad and Tobago, with Hungary, as it will be completely normal for there to be one between Canada and Quebec, once its citizens have decided on sovereignty. And we will have such a treaty.

We keep hearing “But you are not telling Quebecers what you will do afterward. What will the partnership be like? We do not have much of an idea”. Just do a bit of reading. I imagine that the hon. members have most definitely familiarized themselves with Quebec’s bill on sovereignty, that they are also aware of the agreement signed this past June between Messrs. Bouchard, Parizeau and Dumont on the matter of the partnership treaty between Quebec and Canada.

And what will that partnership treaty cover? A customs union, free circulation of goods, free circulation of individuals, free circulation of services, free circulation of capital, monetary policy, manpower mobility, citizenship. It is a treaty between sovereign states. By the very fact that we shall be a sovereign state, we shall have the possibility of signing treaties. If Canada wants to sign treaties with Quebec in other areas, we are open to any and all discussion.

My point is that once we are sovereign, even if our economy is not as big as Canada’s, we will be able to sign treaties just like Estonia, Hungary, Trinidad and Tobago and Latvia.

And they will be signed for the same reason they were signed with the countries I just referred to, because it is in our interest to do so. We claim, and I am sure that the people of Quebec will trust us to do the right thing, that this is in the interest of Quebec and of Canada.

Of course Canada will maintain up to the last minute that there will be no negotiations and no agreement ever. Our Canadian friends are so anxious to make this point that yesterday, when the Prime Minister of Canada was in Quebec, he said: “There will be nothing, because Canada will disappear if Quebec leaves. We do not know what will happen. There will be nothing left, because once Quebec has gone, there will be no more Canada”. That is how we understood Mr. Chrétien’s speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I realize one tends to forget this from time to time, but I may remind the House that members are to be referred to by their ridings or departments.

Mr. Caron: This was of course an oversight, Mr. Speaker. We always refer to him in conversation as Mr. Chrétien, but it is the hon. Prime Minister.

The hon. Prime Minister—Mr. Speaker, do you not think this is extraordinary?—the hon. Prime Minister of Canada said last night in a speech in Quebec, and I should have brought the quote with me, the hon. Prime Minister of Canada said there would be no more Canada if Quebec were to leave. This is really incredible.

If the province of Newfoundland ever decided to withdraw from Canada, would there still be a Canada? The people of Newfoundland—I have met a number of members from that province—are people of great warmth who was very attached to their province.

• (1330)

However, if Newfoundland were no longer a part of Canada, we can assume there would still be a Canada, as there was in 1948 and 1945, when Newfoundland was not part of Canada.

Similarly, if British Columbia withdrew from Canada, saying: “Listen, we are on the west coast, that is where the markets are”, because it is always a matter of markets. Today, countries are markets, and their purpose is to engage in trade, not to protect the well-being of their citizens or ensure the continuity of nations. Let us suppose that the people of British Columbia decide that they face west, towards Japan, the Rockies are too big, there will probably be no more train service through the Rockies, with privatization and all that, the train costs too much. If they decide to become a sovereign country and then, to improve trading with Asia, they form a sort of North American Singapore, will Canada still exist?