

That is why we founded the Bloc Québécois. We were elected to defend the higher interests of Quebec and to enable Quebecers to pursue the affirmation of their identity and development, both individually and collectively. The current talks are headed for an impasse because the basic realities of Quebec are not recognized by the other provinces and the federal government.

Yesterday I listened to members opposite talk about the Canadian nation without any reference to the principle of two founding nations which formed the very basis of Confederation in 1867 but was never observed. They are making pretty speeches today but they want us to be a large ethnic group within an anglophone Canadian nation. The answer is clear: never.

They accuse us of wanting to divide a country that does not recognize us and never did, a country that for decades prohibited French schools in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta; a country that hanged Louis Riel, imposed the War Measures Act, imposed conscription and now wants to impose a referendum thereby conscripting democracy. The sole purpose of this referendum is to short-circuit the mechanism by which the people of Quebec will exercise their right to self-determination. Its funding and spending regulations are worthy of a banana republic.

Today, on the third day of this debate, they are imposing closure, to end debate as we have discussed it enough here. The constitutional circus can go on for weeks or months but here three days of debate is enough and closure is imposed.

The Quebec people are proud and polite. We will all be there to answer no, thanks: No to the federal strait-jacket, no to continuing the constitutional circus on which we are wasting our energies. We will exercise our right to self-determination with honour and enthusiasm. We will repatriate all our taxes. We will assert our right to make all our laws. We will negotiate our international agreements ourselves. We will soon become a sovereign country, a normal people that will take its place in the family of nations.

The federal government is a giant with feet of clay, an overindebted giant, in debt here and abroad, a divided

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giant, unable to have policies that correspond to the real country. It still has the power to waste our time. It still has the power to waste hundreds of millions on phony consultations, a referendum that will cost the government \$100 million but solve nothing at all. But it does not have the power to force us to keep silent. It does not have the power to force us to belittle ourselves and deny who we are. The referendum tactic will not divert us from our essential objective: affirming and developing our people, the Québécois, and soon our country, Quebec.

In closing, I would like to call on all my colleagues elected in Quebec. It is clear; we all know that the present negotiations are on the wrong track as long as the Quebec people are not recognized as such. Faced with this impasse, the federal government is now preparing to push something through and these people are being sucked in. After refusing it they partly accept it and now they tell us in the corridors: "We are ready to hold a referendum, but we think that it will not happen. We won't need it. We shouldn't need it. We would prefer not to use it, but we are preparing legislation anyway. We will pass the bill anyway. We are cutting off debate today".

I would call on the hon. members for Champlain, Gaspé, Matapédia and Abitibi to reflect on the consequences of what they are doing. It is clear now that we are about to make fundamental decisions for the future of Quebecers. I hope that when the time comes we will all be together to make a positive decision which will ensure that we can pursue our own development, look after the real problems, create jobs, take our own place on the international scene in a world of global markets, give our children a future in French in Quebec, make our institutions from now on depend on our own decisions and not be subject to another majority which can impose constitutional changes on us, which can impose fundamental changes without our consent. No self-respecting people would agree any longer to be denied within a federal structure. This is an essential condition for new negotiations and any possible agreement on a whole series of normal relationships with the rest of Canada. First and foremost, they must recognize us for what we are: a people with a brilliant future.