

highly respect the Governor General who represents Her Most Gracious Majesty, whom we all like.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Richelieu for his excellent depiction of the situation of Quebec within Canada. It is true that every time Quebec gained something, it was after fighting against the outdated and inefficient system we are in. Canada is no longer the place that federalists describe but it is a failure that Quebecers will soon want to dissociate themselves from.

To the hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel, I say that had the Quebecers wanted to vote for federalism, they would have voted for you.

• (1820)

And I will add for the benefit of my colleagues from the Liberal Party that while they were dancing at the Governor General's ball, I am sure that they were thinking of cutting health programs.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry but I must interrupt the hon. member. I think that your colleague is allowed to reply. You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Plamondon: I will just thank the hon. member for Drummond, with whom I had the honour of dining last night, for what she just said. While people were at the Governor General's ball, we had supper in a humble restaurant in Ottawa with the hon. member for Charlesbourg. It so happens that we talked about Her Gracious Majesty, saying that perhaps the House should have sent her a telegram of sympathy when she fell from her horse and unfortunately fractured her finger. Being completely conditioned by his job, the hon. member for Charlevoix, a veterinarian, pointed out to me that he was also glad that the horse—

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Environment and Deputy Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would like first of all to congratulate you at the outset of your mandate. I would like also to congratulate all my colleagues here on both sides of this House and tell opposition members that it is my hope that we will be strong adversaries but never enemies.

Like millions of my fellow Canadians, I was not born in Canada. As a young man, I came from very far, indeed from halfway around the world, to give my family and my children a wide range of opportunities that I could not enjoy myself. The island where I was born, Mauritius as it is officially known, was then a British colony and we had to exile ourselves in South Africa or Europe to get postsecondary education.

The Address

After having completed most of my postsecondary studies, I chose Canada as my country of adoption. Canada is as large as Mauritius is tiny. Its tropical climate gives Mauritius almost perpetual sunny and hot weather. But except for the geographical contrasts, the tiny island of Mauritius and the large Canada share striking similarities. Like Canada a former French colony, Mauritius would later be subjected to conquest and colonization by the British. Like Canada, it has kept the heritage of the languages and the cultures of both founding countries. In both cases, Parliament is bilingual, Common Law exists alongside the Civil Code, and the French language lived on and even thrived under the British regime and afterwards.

I was fortunate enough in my tender years to grow up in both the English and the French cultures and to benefit from both. I have always known from experience that it is possible to appreciate at the same time Molière, Victor Hugo or our own Gilles Vigneault, on the one hand, and Shelley, Shakespeare or writers of our time like Hemingway, Margaret Atwood or Michener, on the other.

My own experience in my family, with friends or in a number of occasions in my life have taught me that languages and cultures, far from dividing us, can be a valuable means through which people can meet, share ideas and be united in the same spirit. I speak three languages, since Creole is now recognized as an official language, but I would have dearly liked to get to know many more languages and cultures when I was young.

Just like Canada today, although English and French are dominant there, Mauritius is a genuine meeting point for all the most diverse religions and races.

• (1825)

The most fortunate similarity with this small country and the very large one that Canada is could very well be their sense of peaceful democracy, where individual liberties and human rights are highly valued and represent a most precious asset.

When I first set foot in Canada, I felt at home right away, I felt comfortable and secure in this most democratic country. After living for a few years in British Columbia, I chose to move to Quebec 30 years ago.

I had the opportunity, during my career, to visit Canada coast to coast, to discover small and big lakes, cities, towns, and rural areas. I also had the chance during my life to visit many different parts of the world. I have seen the sun rise on the Zambezi, and set in Southern Australia.

The more I visit other countries, the more I appreciate other lifestyles and living conditions, and the more I appreciate Canada, its climate of profound peace and liberty, its profound democracy.