

the country? If we are not willing to be more generous than we are now in Canada in 1980, how can anyone say that the minorities will be treated better in a divided country? I say that things cannot be better and can be much worse. Indeed, in such a case, Canadians like myself who were born in Ontario and have lived all our lives in this province may become the Palestinians of North America, people without a country. This is a threat which haunts, scares and pains us because we want Canada to exist, we want Canada to improve, and most of all, we want a renewal of Canada which would take into account all the cultural, linguistic, social and economic realities. This is also very important, but I must tell my dear colleague from Mississauga South that there is no Quebecker and certainly no Franco-Ontarian who will be impressed by his economic arguments. The decision made on May 20 will be an emotional one. I hope it will be made in full knowledge of all aspects of the issue because no one will convince the population, at least not myself, by talking about money. I have never been convinced by this factor and I shall certainly not be this time. If strength lies in the challenge, the will to act and the will—

● (1700)

[English]

I agree; it is exactly what the hon. member said—not in those terms; but I think you understood at least that point in your speech, sir.

Mr. Blenkarn: It is exactly what I said. You cannot talk about money; you have to talk about heart.

Mr. Gauthier: That is exactly what I am doing.

[Translation]

If strength lies in the challenge, the will to act imperiously, Franco-Ontarians showed they were capable of overcoming obstacles, of establishing the cultural, economic and social institutions they required and desired. Mr. Speaker, time is lacking today for a complete review, but you will remember the Richelieu Club, l'Union du Canada, the newspaper *Le Droit*, are all institutions created and supported by us and which have defended us. And today, I can state that in that Canadian coexistence experience, we succeeded in building co-operation with our English-speaking colleagues in the country, a federation which in my view compares with any other nation, any other political system around the world. I am proud of it, and I am so much happier with it that I am convinced we can soon sit around a table and negotiate a constitutional renewal that will respect not only the basic rights of the individual, but also linguistic rights across Canada. And the undertaking in February last by five provinces, including my own province of Ontario, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island to enshrine linguistic rights in the Canadian constitution is a step forward. Of course, there remains to convince Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Quebec. Yes, Quebec

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and why? Probably because the current PQ government did not and will not understand what Canada is all about. I tell them exactly what I suggested in the beginning, they do not want Canada, they are committed to its failure. When they refer to sovereignty-association, the inference to independence is easily visible. We are all involved here in an irreversible movement toward change, a constitutional change for the better, hopefully. We will see about this, Mr. Speaker. It is not easy to speak as I do now, because Quebeckers who will be looking at me will say: of course he is from Ottawa-Vanier, Ontario; this explains his views. Well, here in Canada I am still confident that my children, my family, my friends, my fellow Ontarians and Canadians are ready today, after 113 years, to renegotiate and establish a constitution that will respect my personal expectations and those like me who live in a minority situation.

Mr. Speaker, the position of this government is that everything is negotiable except the federative formula and the enshrinement of fundamental individual and linguistic rights. The federal government is ready to enter into negotiations in order to strengthen the Canadian federation. I feel it is important that we federal members of Parliament ought to expect before the end of this year a constitutional conference where the heads of the provinces making up this country will agree publicly on any trade-off they want, be it on natural resources, on manpower and its mobility, on economic, cultural or linguistic matters; but it is important that there be a federal-provincial conference dealing essentially with the renewal of this country, this Canada of ours, this Canada we want to maintain, this Canada which is ours and which we owe to ourselves to defend with all our energy. There is a real threat, Mr. Speaker, and I am talking about the rampant regionalistic tendencies which lead the parts to think they are more important than the whole. That threat explains why the "I" is more prevalent than the "we". That is because today, when people have problems, they tend to scowl, to withdraw into themselves and to build walls around themselves which is, I imagine, a normal and humanly understandable reaction. It is normal, humanly speaking, that when a man feels insecure, he tries to isolate himself.

● (1710)

But I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if that reaction is allowed to persist it will cause serious damage to the fabric of this country and that is why I ask so seriously and with such insistence this Parliament to urge the present government to call a federal-provincial conference next fall to ask the most basic question: Are you for or against the thesis of two founding peoples? Yes or no? We would see then how the provinces perceive the whole issue. Then we would go on to constitutional amendments because they are at the roots of the present debate. If I am a second-class citizen in Ontario, I want to know it and I want to know it clearly. I do not think