

Government Orders

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must say to the Leader of the New Democratic Party she has a lot of courage, and although we do not share the same vision of the future of this country, her respect for democratic values is shared by Quebec and by parliaments in other countries, including Great Britain. I know there will be a political price to pay for what she is doing, but I think that in the long run, people will realize that she was right, since this referendum will resolve absolutely nothing because of the undemocratic and unwarranted provisions this bill contains.

Let this day be remembered as one of the saddest days in the life of this Parliament and the history of this government. A government that was elected to bring Quebec back with honour and enthusiasm is now creating a machine to crush the aspirations of Quebecers.

If you were not convinced before, Mr. Speaker, you should have listened to the speech by the Leader of the Opposition, who gave this government the kiss of death by supporting a bill that, he hopes, will bring Quebecers smartly into line.

This Parliament should be ashamed of this undemocratic exercise. To members who think that in the short term they will be able to make some political gain, I say that in the long run they will realize that the seeds they sow today will lead to the break-up of this country. I want them to understand that Quebecers will never feel bound by this referendum, and that this kind of provocation merely helps the cause of the Bloc quebecois, for which we are thankful.

In any case, the government has shown a lack of integrity in the way it treats its citizens. All this is just a smoke screen to hide what is in fact a deplorable failure. A government that apparently was sincere in its commitments to Quebec is now running roughshod over every jot and tittle of those commitments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but I must remind him that the purpose of the period for questions and comments is to allow comments or questions on what was said by the previous speaker.

Mr. Lapierre: I could not agree more, Mr. Speaker, and I was just getting to that.

I would like to say to the Leader of the New Democratic Party that the weaknesses she found in this bill are there for all to see. There is not a person on this planet who could give the futile exercise the leader of the Opposition favours any credibility.

I may remind the Leader of the Opposition that if he had met the commitments he made in 1980, we would not have the kind of mess we have today, and since he was also among those who killed Meech Lake, he is doubly responsible for this situation.

Government members who have now become the accomplices of the leader of the Opposition should be ashamed. I see the Minister of Labour, who got the nationalist and sovereigntist vote by flirting with sovereignty. I say he has betrayed his constituents.

Ms. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Shefford obviously does not agree with us on what the future of our country should be. In fact, the Bloc Quebecois does not want a future for Canada. The New Democratic Party does want this country to have a future, and that is why we want a fair referendum.

[English]

In listening to the political speeches of the three speakers today from the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the Bloc Quebecois, I feel very comfortable in saying that while there seems to be a lot of fighting of the next election here today in this House, I want to fight for Canada. I think that is what we should be doing now.

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to pose a couple of questions to the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party. It is usually the other way, that she is firing the questions over here. This is a rare opportunity.

First of all, the leader referred to a constituent assembly and I know her party has advocated one. It did in its dissent to the committee that I had the privilege of co-chairing. How does she reconcile the idea of a constituent assembly having no accountability? Does she not feel that constitutional change should reside here,