

when I say peoples, I am referring to the people of Quebec and the people of Canada.

The hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake rose to complain that Saskatchewan would have fewer members. As members from Quebec, we also rose to complain about this eventuality, and the House of Commons ignored our complaint. We protested on the basis of our historic responsibility as the homeland of French Canadians. Today, French Canadians call themselves Quebecers, possibly to the dismay of some people in English Canada.

And now my question is about the Senate. The hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake suggested, to compensate for the decrease in representation of the provinces, an appointed or elected Senate that would act as a kind of counterweight to the fact that the House of Commons would then perhaps represent more ridings and the Senate would then represent the provinces and play a kind of protective role.

Considering his experience in the House of Commons—the hon. member is an experienced member of Parliament who was here throughout the Mulroney era—does he really believe that in the present situation, Canada will ever achieve the kind of constitutional reform that would allow for making changes in its institutions?

• (1605)

[English]

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of comments within the member's question to which I would like to respond.

I will start by addressing the question because the answer is quite simple. I am a great optimist. I believe that people can work together and reach compromises that will be acceptable to most Canadians.

We have built an entire heritage of doing that. We are in the process of reaching agreements with aboriginal people that I wish were further along in process than they are today. We are reaching that point and I know we will do so with the province of Quebec, its people and its leaders as well.

I have no hesitation in saying that when we share the will we will share also the dream of developing a political system that we can all work with and live under.

At the same time, in approaching his question the member made the comment that the Bloc Quebecois is playing a role as the official opposition in the House of Commons. He talked about the Bloc Quebecois ensuring that Parliament is as effective as possible as the official opposition. He implied that the

Government Orders

Bloc Quebecois therefore was able to represent the interests of Saskatchewan people because they are the official opposition. I do not think anything can be further from the truth.

After 18 months in office, the present government enjoys unprecedented popularity among the Canadian people. It is not for anything that the government has done. It is because the ineffective opposition is not communicating to the Canadian people the devastation that the policies of the government are creating on the people of our country.

Nothing could be more clear than the policies that are affecting the people of Saskatchewan. The elimination of the Crow rate in any other Parliament in our history would have been a raucous debate in this Chamber. There would have been members yelling and screaming from their chairs. They would have done everything within the rules, within their power, to prevent the government from changing the Crow rate, which devastates the rail transportation system and the agriculture system in Saskatchewan.

We have completed, over the last couple of days, debate that implements the changes to the Crow benefit. There were 23 Bloc speakers on the bill that changes the government's relationship with Saskatchewan farmers. Of those 23 Bloc speakers, not one defended Saskatchewan's interests on the Crow rate. In between these debates, the Bloc even introduced a motion stating that because of the minuscule payout to the Saskatchewan farmers in compensation for this huge program they have lost, Quebec was somehow discriminated against in the process.

That is not an official opposition representing the interests of Saskatchewan people. That is not an opposition that is going to bring the people in any part of the country to the conclusion that the policies of the government are wrong for all Canadians.

Until we have an effective opposition in the country composed of people who care about all of Canada, the government is going to continue to have undeserved popularity.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to address Bill C-69.

Bill C-69 really has not received much news coverage. On the face of it, it is a technical piece of legislation completely lacking in sex appeal.

At its essence, it can be an important bill for a couple of reasons. First, it points beyond itself to the desperate need to bring about some reform of the Canadian parliamentary system. It points to some of the flaws that we have in our system today. It should be scrutinized, regarded and debated in the context of overall reform of the Canadian parliamentary system.