

*Government Orders*

Quebec and Canada, and Quebec and the United States are not the same as Quebec and Latvia. With all due respect to Latvia, it is not the same. I see a member opposite listening intently and rolling his eyes skyward saying: "Oh, what clever remarks". The hon. member was born in Hull, and I congratulate him on it. There are members like us; the hon. member for Québec-Est was born in Penetanguishene, Ontario. There are still ties. Perhaps there are ties between my hon. colleague opposite and people in Quebec. Perhaps he has ties with people living in Latvia and Estonia.

But it is not on that basis that we want to negotiate. We do not want you to negotiate with us because you like us, because we were with you for 130 years. It is not on that basis that we want to negotiate. We want to negotiate on the same basis as that in Bill C-105, which is not contentious and poses no problems. This basis is the interests of nations negotiating as equals because they are sovereign. This is the way things are done at the international level.

We in Quebec think we can do as well as Latvia, as Estonia, as Trinidad and Tobago. Why? For two good reasons. The first reason is that, if you look at what is currently happening in the world, according to some theories, the most populous countries, the countries with the largest domestic markets, are those that do best.

Then look at the most populous countries in the world and see how they are doing. Let us look at the U.S., which has the highest GDP. I will not talk about the other countries for fear of being accused of discrimination: "You said that France was No. 4 or 5. You are discriminating against the U.S. You like France a little less than the U.S. What is the matter?" "Would a Bloc member say that he liked France less? He is more of a Franco-American; he is not a francophile". In a campaign like the one under way, one must be prudent.

However, if we look at the world's countries on the basis of their GDP per capita and their population, we see Switzerland, with 6 million people, in second place, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in third place, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland—Did I mention any poor countries? These countries are among the top 20, and the top 10 include four or five countries with populations of five, six or seven million. Population is no longer as important a factor as it used to be.

• (1320)

Empires expanded. The British Empire, that my hon. colleague opposite is so fond of, expanded to increase business opportunities for British merchants who wanted to gain access to the market in India, Africa and so on. In those days, this was important, but it is no longer the case today. The size of any given country is not relevant. I am not theorizing. This is a fact

confirmed in the economic accounts of respected countries such as Switzerland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Sweden, and Iceland, which are not as large as some others.

The Austrian population is certainly not as large as the Chinese population, yet Austria does very well for itself. Back in 1991, Austria ranked 10th in terms of per capita gross domestic product. That is not bad at all. This country, a former empire, has had its problems and suffered greatly during the second world war. Today, Austria is a player.

What I mean by that is that globalization is giving smaller countries the chance to enter the global markets. It is not up to their neighbours to decide whether or not they can enter these markets. There are international regulations for that as the OECD has regulations governing treaties between various countries or tax conventions. There are rules.

The size of the country is no longer the determining factor. The main thing is to gain access to international markets. Second, and this is a major factor, there must be a demand for what you produce, your products must be well made and you must have what the economists call a niche of your own, an area in which you excel. You need not be great at everything, just in certain areas and develop markets from there. That is why I think that, in terms of size, Quebec, as a country, would compare favourably with Austria, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden and the like, and do quite well.

Quebec is not a poor nation. Some people seem to want to put up a fence around Quebec, including the Minister of Finance who says: "Listen, when that fence is up, you will lose one million jobs". I am sorry but there will be no such fence, because this is not the way things work. Why did the minister say one million jobs? One million, as in the word millionaire. The Minister of Finance knows about millionaires, but he would be better off talking about the billions of dollars worth of freight transported on his ships, or the millions in goods produced in his plants. It is inappropriate on the part of a finance minister to tell Quebecers that one million of them will become unemployed if sovereignty is achieved, and that a fence will be built around Quebec.

The issue of Quebec's population in relation to the prosperity which it can develop is not a factor here, because it is not for other countries either. As I said, Quebec is not without assets. Its GDP stands at 160 billion dollars. Quebec is a modern state with major institutions, including a deposit and investment fund, Hydro-Quebec and a pension board, and with large corporations which developed over the years, even though, at one point, some of these big entrepreneurs invested in Northern Ireland and in Belgium, and said: "In Quebec, we started off in a small village". I could mention the community of Valcourt, where a major Canadian and Quebec multinational is based. One would think that it is a Quebec company, but we were told: "It is not a Quebec corporation, it is a Canadian one. And if Quebec