

Supply

• (1110)

We all know that the Constitution is important as the basic law that determines who can do what in this country, and the many problems we have, including this constant overlapping of two levels of government, because the federal government always thinks it can do a better job than the other governments and encroaches on all jurisdictions of the provinces, can be traced back to this basic law.

But let me at least point out this contradiction: If you commend the Parliament of Canada for adopting a constitutional amendment, how can you say the Constitution is just a piece of paper?

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Speaker, I did not say the Constitution was just a piece of paper. I acknowledged the importance of the constitutional amendment on official languages in New Brunswick. What I meant and what I actually said was that Canadians would prefer to see us discuss the reality they face every day, which is about jobs and the dignity of work.

During the last election, Canadians realized there had been enough talks about the Constitution and that we should focus all our attention on the problems facing them every day: finding a job and having the dignity of working at that job to earn a living.

[English]

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, before the member got on to his more negative comments about the Reform Party, he did share a bit of his vision of Canada with us. I think he made reference to the historic union of two linguistic and cultural groups modelled by New Brunswick and suggested that was the model for the country.

Is there not a need to expand that vision because that vision is not sufficient for the entire country? Would the member not acknowledge if we tell people in downtown Victoria that this is a historic union of two linguistic and cultural groups that they do not relate to that? If we tell people in most of our aboriginal communities that this is a historic union of two linguistic and cultural groups, that does not describe Canada for them.

Is there not a need to expand beyond the concept of Canada as being simply a partnership of the English and French groups?

[Translation]

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Speaker, I said that I hoped the example of New Brunswick would be followed across the country, and you say that perhaps we should go further.

Of course, adjustments are always necessary, but I am concerned, and I do not see any positive contributions coming from the Reform Party when we hear proposals in this House that are aimed at changing or eliminating the official languages program.

In the case of communities in New Brunswick and many communities across the country, this legislation has played an important role, and I fail to understand why the Reform Party says it wants the well-being of the entire community and at the same time tries to eliminate the programs that helped us survive and in fact develop our potential to a very considerable degree. I am surprised at these statements from the Reform Party.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Leader of the Reform Party for the opportunity to participate in this debate. I was under the impression that he would not give us the chance, since he had said that he would not interfere in what he dubbed a family squabble.

I think he now realizes that this is much more than a family squabble and that we are grappling with a fundamental problem, one that existed before all of our economic problems and deficit woes. I think he realizes, and I thank him for that, that until the issue is resolved, we must confront it head on. At least that is what the Bloc Quebecois has decided to do.

• (1115)

Yesterday, all of the western countries who joined the vast anti-Nazi coalition after 1939 held ceremonies to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Allied landings in Normandy. The thousands of young soldiers who died and all of their comrades in arms were in reality, to quote the cover page of *Time* magazine, the soldiers of the last great crusade. Upon the cessation of hostilities, two antagonistic blocs emerged, each wanting to bring about lasting peace in the western world.

The western world has known peace for nearly 50 years. Troubles and differences of opinions are of course not uncommon, but today, no country in the western world would consider taking up arms to resolve in its favour a political or economic conflict with another country. Yesterday's adversaries such as Germany and France, once centuries-old enemies, have become the staunchest of allies.

Peace in the western world is based on two major interwoven principles, namely democracy and national sovereignty. The exercise of democracy guarantees the exercise of national sovereignty. These principles provide the answers to two fundamental questions about how societies organize themselves politically, namely how is power achieved and who governs whom.

The western model provides clear answers to these two questions. Nations prefer to govern themselves and within each nation, citizens want to democratically choose their govern-