

Private Members' Business

place today, be elected by the people instead of appointed by the governor.

Throughout this period, these demands were the subject of intense and incessant debate and caused constant confrontation between the executive and the legislative bodies. Faced with the arbitrary behaviour and contempt of the governor and his clique, the people's representatives and all democratic individuals had the choice of either submitting or enlisting the means at their disposal and stand on their rights.

That is what they did, but unfortunately, in 1837-38, both groups were defeated. They were defeated in the media, but only ten years later, in 1848, they won when responsible government was recognized. We still enjoy the benefits of that victory today in this House, and it means that as elected representatives, we can take part in the debate and we can ask questions.

You will probably agree that the quality of the questions is more obvious than the quality of the answers, especially when the answers come from the official opposition, but it gives us the right today to put questions to the government. It gives us the right to demand, on occasion, the resignation of ministers. That is part of these new powers. At the time, these powers were acquired as a result of responsible government. This gives elected representatives the right to adopt budgets and appropriations, and it also allows them to question the government about the appointment of senior officials.

Such is the contribution of the Patriotes and the Reformers. That is why we are asking the House to vote on this proposal to recognize the most valuable contribution that both Patriotes and Reformers made at that time to the evolution of our democracy. I will not try to conceal that there are in fact similarities between the background of this historic episode and the present situation.

• (1915)

We must not forget that at the time, as my friend mentioned a few moments ago, they were claiming their independence and there had been a declaration of independence. Today, the sovereignist movement is in office in Quebec and represents the official opposition here, in Ottawa. This shows how sovereignist thinking is deeply rooted in our people, how we genuinely aspire to sovereignty and how the vision of someday having a country that Quebecers will claim as their own is not the undertaking of a single man, but a truly collective endeavour very deeply rooted in the minds of our people.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take part today to the debate on the motion which reads as follows:

That [...]the government should officially recognize the historical contribution of the Patriotes of Lower Canada and the Reformers of Upper Canada to the establishment of a system of responsible democratic government in Canada and in Quebec—

I will come back to that proposal later.

Let me say first of all that I am among those who will not be able to support that motion. However, I want to say that I share in no way, and I underline the words in no way, the arguments and reasons put forward by the member for Calgary Southeast against the motion. Her reasons are not mine and I thought it was important to stress this fact.

It is with great interest that I rise today to speak about that important issue. Most Canadians do not have to go back to their history books to remember the contribution of Reformers and Patriotes during the last century. As we all know, the Patriotes caused the events known today as the Rebellion of 1837.

Although I recognize it is important to stress the contribution of those individuals who, by their action, brought about the establishment of responsible government, I do not subscribe fully to the proposal of the hon. member. If the aim of the hon. member for Verchères is to commemorate important contributions to Canadian democracy, I believe his proposal is somewhat restrictive.

First of all, Canada is a huge territory bordered by three oceans. This alone is sufficient to make us understand that a multitude of individuals must have worked together to build this great country. The motion of the hon. member stresses only the historical contribution of the Patriotes of Lower Canada and of the Reformers of Upper Canada. Notwithstanding that fact, if the motion had been put differently, I could have given it my support. However, I oppose the motion because it does not take into account the fundamental contributions of Canadians in other regions.

Montesquieu said that to love democracy is to love equality. If we recognize the contribution of some, this should be done equally for all.

It would be important to highlight or, at least, not to forget the role played by Joseph Howe to whom we originally owe the principle of accountability in government. I am not saying this to gloss over or down-play what William Lyon Mackenzie did in Upper Canada and Louis Joseph Papineau in Lower Canada, but this does not change the fact that Joseph Howe was the originator of the concept of accountability in government. He was a journalist with the *Nova Scotian*, an influential paper at the time. He had campaigned in favour of accountability in government. When he entered politics, in 1836, he played an important role in the establishment, in Nova Scotia, of what was called a liberal reform government. He was the one who argued with the