

Oral Questions

[English]

RAILWAYS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recently constituents who work at CP Rail and VIA came to me about safety concerns they have about the way the recent collective agreements are being interpreted and enforced.

Canadian Pacific locomotive engineers are concerned about what is called turnaround combination service. VIA running crews are likewise being made to work when in previous times they could have booked rest without penalty.

Making tired people drive trains is not progress; it is tempting fate in the name of a false bottom line. I urge the Minister of Transport to look into the situation and tell CP and VIA to smarten up for the sake of the employees and in the interests of public safety.

* * *

ATLANTIC CANADA

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reply to the rants of the Reform member for Vegreville about the political injustice he perceives exists in Atlantic Canada and specifically in P.E.I.

I take particular exception to the member's statement that "Islanders are forced to endure political oppression". Nothing could be further from the truth.

The only oppression that would occur in the Atlantic region would be if the Reform Party's policies of cutting the public health care system and Americanizing existing social programs were imposed on the people. I was shocked at the unfounded accusation of the member for Vegreville with respect to the political atmosphere on P.E.I.

Once again the Reform Party is exemplifying its pathetic policies of gaining cheap party support through divisiveness not only within the country as it did during the referendum but now within regions.

Shame to the member for Vegreville for unfounded accusations that can only be called cheap political fearmongering.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL PATRIOTS DAY

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow on national patriots day, Quebecers will pay tribute to those men and women who more than 150 years ago decided to defend and promote values which today are often taken for granted: freedom and democracy. It is no coincidence that November 23 was chosen by the National Assembly as the day on which we honour the memory of those who fought for civil and political freedoms as well as their national freedom.

On November 23, 1837, the Patriotes defeated British troops at Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu, although the British outnumbered them and were better equipped. About a year ago, this House adopted a motion officially recognizing the historic contribution of the Patriotes to the establishment of democratic and responsible institutions. However, this government has taken no concrete action to make this recognition effective. I hope the government will acknowledge the will of the House and take appropriate action without delay.

* * *

[English]

ATLANTIC CANADA

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday in a particularly hallucinogenic episode the member for Vegreville visualized himself and his party as the deliverers of freedom and democracy for the poor oppressed souls in Atlantic Canada.

His reference to the politically oppressed people of P.E.I. was just the latest and greatest example of why the Reform Party was not, is not and will never be anything but a bizarre footnote in the history of a short lived, radical, ideological party.

The Reform Party should have no illusions about sucking in the good people of Atlantic Canada. The people of Prince Edward Island and the Atlantic provinces have shown great maturity in the decisions they have made through the political process.

• (1415)

The statements made on Monday by the hon. member for Vegreville and in the past by those from his party only strengthen the case that the people of Atlantic Canada made the right decision on October 25, 1993 by completely rejecting the Reform Party and giving a resounding vote of support to the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party, the only national party that speaks for Atlantic Canadians.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the final stretch of the referendum campaign, the Prime Minister made a commitment to respond to Quebecers' desire for change. In the days following the referendum, the government set up two committees. One, chaired by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, is to propose changes to the federal system by Christmastime. Yesterday, outside the House, the government leader postponed the tabling of the committees' proposals by several months.