

*Government Orders*

the existence of two founding peoples equal before the law and of several nations. Unfortunately, this bill makes no reference to the signs that would enable Quebecers to recognize themselves as belonging to this country. This bill recognizes only one nation, the nation of Canada, and gives the Minister of Canadian Heritage the authority to promote one identity: the Canadian identity.

• (1200)

There is worse. The heritage minister, who sponsored this bill, testified before the Standing Committee on National Heritage on December 1. My colleague, the hon. member for Québec, asked him at that time why his bill made reference to only one nation, namely the Canadian nation, instead of two, that of Quebec and Canada. With the arrogance and ignorance that have come to characterize him, he replied: "I would be grateful if you could tell me, or if there is not enough time, my officials who will be testifying before you at a later date, which clause exactly refers to a single Canadian nation. All I can see in this bill is references to Canadian identity. And that is not the same thing".

Again, the minister is playing games. He is insinuating that my hon. colleague from Québec did not understand a thing.

Let me explain to the Minister of Canadian Heritage a couple of basic rules of grammar. When you write "nation", it is a singular. And singular means one, not two, because then you would have a plural, meaning more than one. When you write "Canadian nation", the word "Canadian" is used as a qualifier or adjective and, in French, the function of the adjective is to modify the word it is combined with. In this bill, we are not talking about just any nation, but the Canadian nation.

Let us take a closer look at clauses 4 and 5 of the bill, which specifically give the minister the mandate to promote the Canadian nation.

Clause 4 reads, and I quote:

4.(1) The powers, duties and functions of the Minister extend to and include all matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction, not by law assigned to any other department, board or agency of the Government of Canada, relating to Canadian identity and values, cultural development, heritage and areas of natural or historical significance to the nation.

As for Clause 5, it reads as follows:

5. In exercising the powers and performing the duties and functions assigned to the Minister by section 4, the Minister shall initiate, recommend, coordinate, implement and promote national policies, projects and programs with respect to Canadian identity and values, cultural development, heritage and areas of natural or historical significance to the nation.

In this case, there is no room for interpretation in the French version of the clause, as the word "canadiens" is spelled with an "s". If you go back to the grammatical rule I just gave, this means that the qualifier "canadiens" modifies every noun that

precedes it in the sentence—the same way that "Canadian" modifies every substantive that comes after. The meaning of Clause 5 then is the following: "In exercising the powers and performing the duties and functions assigned to the Minister by section 4, the Minister shall initiate, recommend, coordinate, implement and promote national policies, projects and programs with respect to Canadian identity and Canadian values, Canadian cultural development, Canadian heritage and areas of natural or historical significance to the nation—that is to say the Canadian nation".

You will have noticed that this entire bill is predicated on the concept of a Canadian nation. For the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the cultural agencies under him, there is only one nation, the Canadian nation.

In the brief he tabled with the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, Mr. Monière reported to us the results of polls conducted by Léger & Léger and related by Maurice Pinard, a renowned McGill University professor whose integrity, credibility and intellectual honesty are unquestionable.

These polls show that Quebec's national identity has evolved considerably and that Quebecers are more and more likely to identify themselves as Quebecers first and foremost and not as French Canadians, much less as Canadians. In 1992, 54 per cent of respondents of all linguistic origins—this is important—referred to themselves as Quebecers, 26 per cent as French Canadians and 20 per cent as Canadians. These figures clearly point to the existence of a Quebec culture, a Quebec identity, a Quebec nation, which the bill before us does not reflect.

• (1205)

Many things were said in committee on this concept of nation. When department officials came to testify, they told us that since this bill was not a constitutional document, it did not have to mention the two founding nations of this country. I must humbly admit that I did not have time to verify this statement from a legal standpoint. But I know very well that at the time of the "beautiful risk", we tried to have Quebec's distinct society recognized in the Constitution, but the rest of Canada turned us down.

We are on the horns of a dilemma, the one about the chicken and the egg, which will be much more simple and easy to solve through Quebec sovereignty, since the government refuses to make any amendment to this bill which would have helped us feel at home in this country, even though we were the first to arrive in this country named Canada by Jacques Cartier, a country whose national anthem was composed—lyrics and music—by two Quebecers, Calixa Lavallée and Basile Routhier. We are being denied the right to feel at home in this country, so the only alternative is to leave.