

## S. O. 21

if we can have them with the other provinces? I fail to see why they want to make such a big stink about the fact that Quebec demanded a firm commitment from the Secretary of State that he would sign a general agreement with Quebec on the application of Bill C-72. I called the *Fédération des francophones hors Québec*, and I asked them whether they were against a general agreement. They said of course not, as long as it wasn't compulsory.

Otherwise, the federal Government would be restricted in its ability to intervene in a province that refused to sign the agreement. It is not compulsory under the Bill. Nothing in Bill C-72 obliges the federal Government to sign agreements, but if it is possible to reach an understanding on the implementation of a policy or on a general agreement with the provinces, I don't see why this should not be done.

As I said before, there is no legal obligation to sign an agreement. However, the law must be respected, and if Bill C-72 is passed, any agreement will have to comply with the provisions of the Act. Our conclusion: There is no problem, and the Secretary of State is trying to get political mileage out of this very important issue. It is just a lot of rhetoric, and, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it is right to take advantage of this situation to try and score political points.

Mr. Speaker, if I may continue, and I see you are signalling that my time is running out, the Committee's Fourth Report asked the Government, pursuant to Standing Order 99, to table a response. I recommend that Hon. Members read this response, because in it the Government makes a commitment to support certain recommendations made by the Committee with respect to the administration of the official languages program: Language of service, language of work, equitable participation, all those important subjects we discussed in Committee and which Committee Members would be well advised to read.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Fourth Report ought to be recommended reading. Read the Government's response as well. It is very enlightening and may be a positive contribution to the debate.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the Chair till two o'clock this afternoon.

At 1 p.m., the House took recess.

## AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

## STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 21

[Translation]

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

## DEMOCRATIC FUTURE OF HAITI

**Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to remind us that for too long, unfortunately, the people of Haiti have been going through hard times. But with the departure of Presidents François and Jean-Claude Duvalier, Haitians expected much more freedom in a more democratic state.

Unfortunately, elections were held recently despite the boycott by a very large part of the population. The people did not want to take part in this travesty of democracy and they clearly showed their deep desire for democracy in that country.

A group of parliamentarians recently visited that country, began a dialogue with the present leaders and made recommendations to the Government for assistance to the Haitian people who are suffering and need help, but also for something most basic and important—the respect of individual rights and freedoms.

Now, I must regretfully observe that the Government has not yet officially followed up these recommendations made by Members of Parliament. I trust that the visit here in Ottawa by a distinguished politician from Haiti, Gérard Gourgue, one of the leaders of the *Front national de concertation* that is trying to establish democracy in that country, will open the Government's eyes and lead it to take concrete action on behalf of the Haitian people and for the establishment of true democracy in that country.

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[English]

## HISTORIC EVENTS

## THE PHILIPPINES—ANNIVERSARY OF DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

**Mr. Andrew Witer (Parkdale—High Park):** Mr. Speaker, on June 12 Canadians of Filipino origin will celebrate an important turning point in the history of their homeland. It was on June 12, 1898, that General Emilio Aguinaldo, leader of the revolutionary movement, declared the independence of this former Spanish colony. While the Treaty of Paris ceded the islands to the United States and the Philippines did not become an independent republic until 1946, Aguinaldo's declaration began a process that would lead to the independence that the Philippine nation had long sought.

In the years following World War II, many Filipinos chose to immigrate to Canada in search of a better life for themselves and their families, making a tremendous contribution to the growth and development of Canada in the process.