

Supply

• (1100)

Mr. Speaker, since you are telling me that my time is almost up, I would like to take this opportunity to move the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by deleting the words after "Canadians to" and replacing them with the following: "Continue to live together in a federation".

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the Leader of the Reform Party and to the Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs. One insists that we must reopen the debate, while the other says we should let the matter rest. The Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs says we should not talk about this subject any more and I agree with him because we have debated this matter long and hard since 1989. I have served in this Parliament since 1984 and we have been talking about this for a very long time.

You will undoubtedly recall, Mr. Speaker, that debates have taken place and two or three parliamentary commissions have been struck. There have been a whole series of seemingly endless debates, the end result of which was Meech. And Meech, as you know, did not work, in spite of the fact that it represented Quebec's minimum demands.

Some hon. members: Yes, but not those of the regions, for example.

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): Yes, for the other regions as well. It could have worked, but Meech was rejected.

Another debate followed after that. All kinds of debates took place with respect to the Charlottetown accord and committees held hearings. As you know, Charlottetown failed as well. Therefore, it is too late for us to reopen the debate on this subject because for us, the debate is closed.

Quebec conducted the most serious exercise in its history. The Bélanger-Campeau Commission received 600 briefs and heard testimony from 200 witnesses while at the same time, a special committee of experts held meetings. Once again, Quebec's leading experts concluded that if Quebec was to grow to its full potential and fight its way out of this economic crisis in which it was fast sinking along with the rest of Canada, it needed to gain control of approximately twenty areas. These are not my recommendations, but those of leading Quebec experts. Charlottetown also proved to be a rejection of this position.

Therefore, when the hon. member says we must continue to debate this issue, I say to him that as far as we are concerned, the subject is closed. We have now proceeded to the next phase, which is to achieve sovereignty for Quebec, not at the expense of the rest of Canada, but for the benefit of Quebec.

• (1105)

And so I agree with the Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs when he says that we must stop talking about this subject. He is right. As far as we are concerned, the time for talk is long over. We have moved on to the next phase.

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what was said by the hon. member, and I must say that every time the parties opposite refer to Meech and Charlottetown without mentioning the Charest report, I begin to wonder. After all, it was a solution. Some people even resigned because of certain developments.

When they talk about Charlottetown, on which a referendum was held, I get the impression that the whole Bloc machine did not want the accord to make it, for the simple reason that it would have been good for Quebec and would have completely eclipsed the separation option.

It hardly makes sense for you to invoke Charlottetown. At least to me it does not. You mentioned the recession, but you have now reached the point where you want to—

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but members opposite are talking about a recession, and through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to their concerns. The hon. member told us he did not want separation to be at the expense of the rest of Canada. For heaven's sake, how are you going to do that? The way you talk about separation today is already sending waves of uncertainty on the markets. This country is no longer seen as a good place to live and do business, now that its citizens are starting to worry about the future of the country. And yet this is the country, this is the Canadian federation that has been instrumental in bringing us all, including Francophones in the province of Quebec, Acadians and all other groups in the country, where we are today. And now you tell us you do not want separation to come at—

The Speaker: Order, order, please. I would appreciate it if hon. members would always address their remarks to the Chair.

Mr. Robichaud: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I simply wanted to say that they tell us they want to separate without harming the rest of Canada, and I find that hard to take! I think Canadians know better than to be convinced by such arguments.

Mr. Benoît Tremblay (Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, there was at least one contradiction in what was said by the Secretary of State.

He started his speech by commending the Parliament of Canada for enshrining institutional bilingualism in New Brunswick in the Canadian Constitution, as if that were something extraordinary. He went on to say that it was no longer important to talk about the Constitution, that it was just a piece of paper and that we now had to talk about job creation. I wish the Secretary of State would make up his mind. If the Constitution is not important, then please explain why it is so important to have what happens in New Brunswick in the Constitution.