

*Government Orders*

I must say, however, that it is thanks to Pierre Elliott Trudeau and those who followed in his footsteps that Canada has become the country that we know today.

I will not talk much longer because I am anxious to hear the slanderous and malicious criticisms of the opposition throughout the afternoon. I challenge the opposition to find a better country than Canada.

**Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac):** Quebec.

**Mr. Gagnon:** Quebec is part of Canada. No independent country enjoys a reputation such as that of Canada. Unfortunately, we only hear hogwash from the opposition. And that is unfortunate.

I invite opposition members to make a comparison. I am speaking to you as a Quebecer, a Gaspé native, a francophone. I am asking you to take into account the efforts made on this side of the House, to recognize the efforts made by this party, the efforts made by some English-speaking members.

I see the hon. member for Ontario, who is an English-speaking Canadian. I do not always share his views, but here is a young man who went to the trouble of learning French. There are others too. I do not know them all, but several have made the effort. I believe this is the beauty of our country. This is what makes it interesting.

We will overcome each of the obstacles set up by the opposition, starting with the upcoming referendum.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I wonder in what country my colleague from Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine lives. It must be a country somewhat different from ours.

I too live in Canada. I must agree with him that, as long as the referendum is not a done deal, I still live in a country called Canada. I think he does not live in the same country as the rest of us, because he may speak English, but he does not read it. Last week-end, there was an article in the *Globe and Mail* depicting the bilingual situation and the assimilation level of French-speaking Canadians. I referred to it this morning in my speech, and I believe the hon. member was here at the time.

The assimilation rate throughout Canada is 36 per cent. Bilingualism is highly praised and my colleague can be proud to be Canadian as much as he wants to. He has the right to be proud, I do not deny it. But what is surprising is the fact that he does not better understand the country, or the part of the country he comes from.

• (1350)

He told us about a school in the Magdalen Islands which was in bad shape, but he must not forget that Quebec is just getting out of its torpor after nine years under a Liberal government. Liberals were in office for nine years. So, if the people in the Magdalen Islands were not able to fix the windows in their schools or make any renovations, it is because of the Liberal government which has been ousted in Quebec. There is no doubt that Mr. Garon, to whom we will forward your complaints, will hasten to find a way to solve this problem, because he has solved many problems in other small schools.

The hon. member said he had never heard the official opposition make any positive comments about federalism, but I think all my colleagues have heard me say how much we owe to the CBC. That corporation helped us get out of the hole and believe in what we were. It also helped us define what we were and get over the Dark Ages in Quebec, all thanks to a great Liberal federalist, Jean Lesage, who was a federal minister here, in Ottawa, before returning to Quebec to tell us: "Come on, Quebecers! Let us be masters in our own house!"

**Mr. Gagnon:** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to discuss with the hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata. I think she does have a lot of respect for my region, for the Gaspé peninsula, and for the problems, mainly economic, that we have in my constituency of Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Unfortunately, I do not agree with her option, which is legitimate in a way—Quebec's separation. But as a federalist, I will tell you that the CBC's achievements she talked about are precisely the result of co-operation among all Canadians, between anglophones over there, anglophones over here and francophones across the way. That is what has made and will continue to make the strength of Canada.

That is why, with the recognition of the CBC's achievements, and the commitment of the federal government to defend, promote and ensure the development of the French fact in Canada, the next century is most promising for Canadian unity.

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Madam Speaker, let me remind the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine that we are paying 25 per cent of the CBC budget, but we cannot say that the English network is of much use to us. I would like to go back to the remarks made by the hon. member, who said that all official opposition's comments were hogwash.

I think the hon. member has no respect for the vote of confidence given the elected members of the Bloc Québécois, for the mandate they were given to come to Ottawa to work after Quebec's interests. That is exactly what we are doing today, defending Quebec's interests. I think the hon. member does not respect our mandate.