

unanimously that without Cartier, the federation would have never existed.

An hon. Member: True!

Mr. La Salle: Moreover, it is not accidentally that Lower Canada positively refused any proposition for a mere legislative union. As well, it was not a fancy of the French Canadians to require assurances of equality and autonomy. They knew that this was an absolute condition allowing them to maintain their identity, their institutions, their language and their culture. So much so that Cartier himself maintained with conviction, and I quote:

Some people have regretted that there is in the federation a diversity of races, and hoped that with time an end would come to this . . . The melting of the races into one is sheer impossibility.

I did not say that, Mr. Speaker. The Father of Confederation did. A pact enshrining the association and equality of two peoples into a common will to live together, but respecting each one's autonomy, such has been the perception of Confederation among French Canadians from 1867 to this day. Even after so many years, Quebecers and other French-speaking Canadians have lost patience, put claims, made requests, pleas, demands and even entreaties. But there is no way they could go over that so easily, forget everything and blindly support the badly implemented, ill-conceived and overly rigid kind of federalism we now have.

French Canadians have tired legs that made too many unfruitful steps, a tired hand that drafted brief after brief, a tired mind that tried pointlessly to explain, persuade and convince. Some may think this is all exaggeration. If by any chance someone still believes that Quebec's feelings towards Confederation have deteriorated since the coming into power of the Parti Québécois, I will quote from a short work titled "Georges Etienne Cartier, a Canadian Statesman" published in 1914 by Mr. Lavergne. The author had this to say about Confederation:

The political status established by Cartier cannot be permanent. Two peoples can live together in a small country, but we believe this is impossible in a large country once those peoples have come of age. The day will come when there will be a separation between east and west. The former will break into three or four republics whose frontiers will be dictated by geography.

Mr. Speaker, I am striving to show what we French Canadians were expecting from the 1867 alliance, and to what extent our hopes have been disappointed from generation to generation. I have no intention of inflaming the debate by accusing any group. But I would remain with a bad conscience and even a feeling of not telling the truth if I did not emphasize that national unity mainly deteriorated during the year after Confederation's 100th birthday, when federal-provincial relations turned into a war of attrition. Let me state quite bluntly that this coincided with the coming to power of the gentleman who this very day is holding the office of Prime Minister.

● (1740)

Until then, the federal government had tried to be flexible enough, to compromise enough, to meet, after a fashion, the primary claims of Quebec, as those of the other provinces as

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well. All was not going smoothly, of course, and Quebec nationalism did rear its head frequently, but the fact remains that the federal government showed more understanding, more compassion, more good will, while in Quebec, formulas of agreement and adjustments were advocated.

These attitudes, on both parts, created a tolerable *modus vivendi* which could eventually have led to a profitable dialogue; but all was cut short by the pithy expression hurled by the Prime Minister in Montreal: "Finies les folies!" From that time on, a policy was built up of hardening, refusal, ultimatums, intrigues, arrogance and provocation. Until then, federalism which had at times meant difficulties for Quebec suddenly took on the shape of a threat, of an obstacle. And that is why we are pleading anew the case of the future of this country, Mr. Speaker. Unless the Prime Minister modifies to a great extent his concept of confederation and of the relationship between the central government and the provinces, I think he runs the risk of being recorded by history as having badly served the cause of his French-speaking fellows citizens. Because, without trying to indulge in cheap politics and without trying to minimize the merits of the Prime Minister in enforcing respect for the rights of the French language in Canada, I must tell him that he is deluding himself if he believes that his policy of bilingualism alone will silence the desires for independence on the part a segment of the Quebec population and that it will solve the differences between Canadians.

It is wrong to pretend that it is only an issue of language, Mr. Speaker. I notice that in his speech, the Prime Minister spoke of a new Canada since November 15. I think it is important that members of parliament and Canadians at large know what happened before November 15. Why is it that on the evening of November 15, a majority of Quebecers rejected this approach, this kind of federalism, that system which we have now? Do we have to remind our friends opposite that everything started deteriorating seriously some 10 years ago, when our present Prime Minister came to power. He was right. How to explain, for example, that this situation dates back in history to the time of the then premier of Quebec, Mr. Johnson, who had to fight with the Prime Minister of today? Then it was the turn of Mr. Bertrand, of Mr. Bourassa and finally now Mr. Lévesque. There is nothing new in the fact that the team which represents Quebec on the government benches is regarded by a majority of Quebecers as a gang of traitors on so many issues.

I remember quite well what caused this discontent among Quebecers, the attitude of this government under the leadership of the Prime Minister. They offered a refusal, which I still remember quite well, Mr. Speaker, to proposals which matched the legitimate aspirations of my province, and were presented by Mr. L'Allier, or Mr. Hardy or Mr. St. Pierre. And I still remember, and perhaps the member for Longueuil was one of the people involved that evening, of being accused of separatism because I supported the representations made by the province of Quebec.

Mr. Olivier: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.