

*Heritage Day*

in the absence of the immigration to which I have referred, or in the absence of women joining the work force in substantial numbers, we may experience a labour shortage. It would be ill-advised in these circumstances to give up eight million man days of work.

Mention was made that we might in some way recognize native Indians through this method of taking a day off. That, to me, is utterly ridiculous. If we want to recognize the Indian people, we should fulfil this desire by doing something for them which is meaningful, such as recognizing their aboriginal rights and trying to settle them in an equitable way. Or we should be coming to grips with measures for securing the economic development of their land, or solving the educational difficulties they are experiencing. Or, perhaps, if we want to take time off, spending a moment of silence would be more appropriate in view of the government's record in dealing with the needs of the Indian people. It seems to me the suggestion of a Heritage Day devoted in part to the recognition of the Indian people is a supreme example of tokenism toward people who are experiencing serious problems which must be met by serious proposals so that solutions can be reached.

You may have gathered by this time, Madam Speaker, I cannot support the measure before us, and I hope it will not pass or gain approval during the course of the debate.

**Mr. Maurice Dupras (Labelle):** Madam Speaker, I find it ironic that Bill C-208 should follow immediately Bill C-68. If members of the House were listening attentively to the words spoken by some of their colleagues I think they would have come to the conclusion that Canada does not need another national holiday. If a Canadian is not ready to be deprived of his favourite American program to increase his Canadianism, what are we doing speaking of adding yet another Canadian holiday.

I was flabbergasted listening to contributions made by others in this debate to the effect that all this means is another paid holiday. To my mind Canada is much more than a paid holiday. I do not believe we should have another holiday until it means much more than that.

[*Translation*]

And this interpretation, Madam Speaker, is not more honourable than the one we hear now and again from those for which Canadianism does not extend beyond the profit dimension. If federalism is profitable, it is good for them. They consider themselves as Canadians. But I find absolutely unacceptable that this Canadianism, this federalism be restricted to some arithmetical consideration and as far as I am concerned the Canadian heritage extends much beyond this consideration, Madam Speaker.

For some people, this paid holiday would be the only benefit from this bill. Some of my colleagues defended quite well the case of our economy which is an economy of austerity particularly when the productivity of Canadians is much lower than our neighbours'. This is no time to toy with the idea of yet another holiday; we should rather be asking ourselves what we could do to straighten out our economy. What could Canadians do to straighten out the economy of their country?

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

● (1650)

I should not like to be rude or unkind, Madam Speaker, but I wonder if it is not typical for Canadians to say: "What's in it for me?" If it gives me a paid holiday, I am all for it, period. But we should consider what Canadian heritage means to Canadians. And if it is the only reason, Madam Speaker, I believe we can multiply holidays as much as we want, but this will never enhance the celebration of Canadianism.

It is time to examine all the advantages we have as Canadians. You just have to go abroad in countries a little less privileged to see all our advantages, the wealth we have in Canada not only in the central area of the country but also in the east, in the west and in the north. In creating a new holiday, in February or on the third Monday or in the fall, the first concern should be the celebration of this Canadianism. It should have a certain meaning. It should represent something for Canadians. But, if it is a paid holiday, I suggest it is not worthwhile and that we should not study this bill any longer. I am convinced that the hon. member responsible for this legislation felt the same way I do about this idea of a national holiday. We could call it Flag Day or Sir John A. Macdonald Day or someone else's day. It could simply be Canadians' Day, because in fact Canadians have benefited from this rich land. And I cannot find a better way of expressing this than by saying in English:

[*English*]

People should count their blessings and evaluate all the advantages that there are for Canadians in having inherited this rich land. This is why I am having difficulty in following the reasons that have been invoked for adding another holiday. This debate may last long enough for me to discover from my compatriots the reason for an extra holiday, apart from the ones to which reference has already been made.

Perhaps we should also try to seek the opinion of the Indians of Canada as to how they see another Canadian holiday. What conception do they have of a truly Canadian holiday for Canadians? Since we are speaking about a national holiday, why not consult the provinces and territories and ascertain their views on what form it should take, on what it means to Canadians? Should it be called "Confederation Day", what I call "Canada Day", or something else?

[*Translation*]

National holidays can be created which have no real meaning. I know I will offend some people but I will give this example: In the province of Quebec, by tradition, June 24 was Saint John the Baptist's day, the patron saint of French Canadians. But in recent years June 24 has been politicized to the point where it is the feast of a small group which celebrates in its own way and according to its capacities. They find that the only way to celebrate is to have an orgy that lasts three or four days, makes a lot of noise, and has no meaning in the province of Quebec for the majority. That is why, Madam Speaker, I am opposed to creating a national holiday if it has no meaning.

As much as June 24 used to have a meaning for French-speaking Canadians in the province of Quebec, today it does not mean anything at all to the very large majority. It