

National Unity

federal government suggested that the federal spending power be limited. Twice in the past 15 years we have not succeeded in finding a solution through constitutional negotiations. If we have not been able to succeed in 15 years of negotiations with provincial governments, which at least accepted the idea of the maintenance of Canada as one country, what basis for optimism do we have that we can successfully undertake negotiations now when we have as one important factor on the other side, the government of Quebec, which refuses even to accept the idea of the maintenance of Canada as a fundamental basis for negotiation? In the words of my namesake and friend—sometimes it is confusing—the hon. John Roberts, “it takes two to make a deal,” two to negotiate, and unless we have at least the common understanding that we are seeking to preserve some entity called Canada, negotiations cannot possibly lead to a successful resolution.

Mr. Paproski: You don't want to negotiate.

Mr. Malone: You can't negotiate with a gun.

Mr. Roberts: It is certainly worth discussing different approaches or different views at the provincial level or with the people of Canada. Perhaps we can agree on precise grounds for negotiation, but negotiations should not be undertaken simply for their own sake. They should be undertaken when there are reasonably optimistic grounds to think that those negotiations could lead to success.

It would be a tragedy if these buzz words or magic wands, as I have called them, were taken for complete reality; it would be a tragedy if they persuade us that if we simply undertake constitutional negotiations, or a re-thinking of powers, or a different management of economic policy, our problems would be resolved. That would lead us away from the main question which confronts us; it would be a tragedy to believe we can escape confronting the present “moment of truth”.

● (1750)

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, we have, as a society and as a country, arrived at the moment of truth. It is not, as the Leader of the New Democratic Party said, a moment of truth in which the Prime Minister claims that Quebecers must decide between being Quebecers and Canadians. That is a complete distortion of the moment of truth. The question that Quebecers face is whether they wish to be Quebecers within Canada or Quebecers without Canada.

There is a moment of truth, too, for English-speaking Canadians, which calls upon them to decide what kind of Canada they wish to create, what idea of the country they have for the future.

It is not simply a question of leadership. Yesterday the Leader of the New Democratic Party asked why have we abandoned leadership in the province of Quebec? Why let René Lévesque take the action? Why have we not been saying that French should be the language of work in the province of Quebec? Why have we not been doing the same things to indicate our support for strengthening the Francophone cul-

[Mr. Roberts.]

ture and language in Quebec? Mr. Speaker, where has the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby been? We have been saying those things. The Prime Minister has been saying them. He showed leadership in Quebec before he entered this House. He showed it as Prime Minister in the speech he gave in Quebec City after the election of November 15, and in the speech he gave to the United States Congress. Do hon. members opposite think the Prime Minister has not provided leadership, that the public does not see that leadership in view of the place we stand in the opinion polls of this country? As a Ukrainian friend of mine used to say, “It is a nonsense.”

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I do not think you have any Ukrainian friends.

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I have a Ukrainian friend sitting right beside the hon. member.

Mr. Paproski: Not if you keep on like that.

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the jibes of hon. members. Seriously, however, I think we have arrived at the point where there is a fundamental divergence of opinion between political parties, and I think that is important.

The question is: what is our idea of this country we are trying to build? I said earlier that I approached the debate with some sense of dismay. A large part of that stems from the remarks made yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition. I would have thought that those remarks might be the result of some imprecision or carelessness of language in debate, but he restated them quite clearly last night on television.

His remarks, reported at page 7319 of *Hansard*, reveal an idea of this country at variance with the idea of Canada that we, as a government, hold for our country. It is clear that he regards bilingualism, or official languages, not as something which unites this country but as something which divides it; not as something that is valuable and to be welcomed, but something that is grudging—

An hon. Member: That is true.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. member says that is true. I hope it is not, and I trust that I am not misstating the comments of the Leader of the Opposition. He regards it not as something which draws us together but something which drives us apart. He feels that unity in our country is despite bilingualism, and is not based upon it.

That is a fundamental divergence from the approach we take on this side of the House. We do not regard two official languages as something to be accepted grudgingly. We do not believe it is divisive. The Leader of the Opposition said that two official languages, by definition, divide us. I suppose you could say the fact that there are two sexes, by definition, does not unite. Yet in fact those divisions are the basis of solidly uniting a family unit. So it is with two official languages. It is our view that the existence of two official languages is a keystone to our society—not one that we are reluctant about, not one that is regrettable or a source of division but some-