

Supply

happened during the last five or six years, how can she can understand what is going on now in Canada?

I would like people to stick to the facts, and the fact is that we were elected to this House and given a clear mandate. We have no qualms about being here. Since Quebecers pay 25 to 30 per cent of all federal taxes, we have the right to have a say in the direction this country wants to take until Quebec becomes sovereign.

[English]

Ms. Augustine: Madam Speaker, I spoke about the frustration of Canadians on a daily basis as they listen to, as the member said, the only mandate of the Bloc, which is to separate.

We are here to build a nation. We are here to respond to the economic needs before us. We are here to ensure that our societies and communities function. We are here to provide for all people the kind of society in which our children will find jobs and opportunities to grow and develop.

• (1335)

The constant back and forth of members across the way talking about separation, because that is their mandate, is what I am talking about in terms of frustration. We are frustrated with this. Canadians are frustrated with this discussion.

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate in order to express my deep commitment to the preservation of Canada.

I must also express my disappointment in the fashion in which the debate has found its way into the House. I have yet to be convinced that the leader of the Reform Party is not simply using a critical juncture in our country's history to score fleeting political points.

In his motion the Reform leader refers to the need for a defining vision for Canada. He then outlines a series of policy options to indicate his own sense of vision and that of his party.

My sense of vision for a nation does not rest with the policy options we choose. It rests with the values we pursue; in our case values of generosity, mutual respect and generational and international responsibility, to name a few. Policies should then be chosen to reflect the values contained in that vision.

To build a country purely around good management and social order has been the mistake made by many in history and it is not one we need make here in Canada. Having said that, I recognize the democratic process and as such am accorded the opportunity to place my own views on the record.

In some ways I guess I am relieved. Most of us here as well as most other Canadians welcome the chance to reaffirm a commitment, a commitment to remain the best place in the world to live, just as the UN has recently decreed, because neither a Canada without Quebec nor a Quebec without Canada would be able to claim that same international standing.

Apart from our obvious abundance of resources and relative affluence, the real bounty we possess lies in our unique history, our ability to compromise and understand the position and perspective of others, to subjugate our own narrow self-interests in the interest of the larger whole. This is the way we have evolved.

Canadians either consciously or unconsciously have an abiding understanding that none of us individually, regionally, even collectively lives alone in the country. Nor can we or should we wish to claim some kind of moral or cultural superiority. This is what makes our country great; not our wealth, not our beauty, not our vast expanse and limitless developmental potential, but our people and the course we have charted for ourselves.

We need only look to see what is happening elsewhere to realize that the struggle among elements of our own Confederation mirrors a larger debate taking place in every continent.

In many countries cultural conflict has been the source of bloodshed and has caused the loss of generations; such a tragedy and all because the solitudes are resolute. We watch aghast as others, not us, fail to find the will to co-exist and even thrive.

In Canada our competing values have been a source of enlightenment. Differences have taught us compassion, mutual respect, a desire to know and embrace the intricacies of other cultures, other worlds and other points of view.

We embrace these and champion our multicultural fabric as the asset that distinguishes us from other countries. For too long our leadership has been timid, assuming that ordinary Canadians might not share the same spirit of compromise, the same generosity, the same noble purpose of which I speak.

I feel otherwise. Canadians, because of our relative youth, because of our unique history and perhaps even because of an unnatural preoccupation with our Constitution, have spent more time discussing, debating and defining our country than we have a right to. However we have done it and we are a more thoughtful place for it. We need only look a little south to our American neighbours to recognize the truth in this. The United States approach to nationhood demands conformity by its citizens to a narrowly defined set of habits, traditions and principles.