

The Address

Mr. Boyer: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has listed a number of factors: language, the position of aboriginal Canadians, those who feel they are left on the periphery, the economic recession, the east-west links that have perhaps broken down, taxation issues, and others. All of these are sand in the gears grinding down the good will and successful operation of our country.

Most of these serious issues are problems in our country because of the underlying difficulty that we have communicating with ourselves as Canadians. That is why I was emphasizing the cultural basis of what our Canadian experience is. When we have a more robust Canadian identity, we are proud and capable of sharing without feeling inhibited, without having that Canadian self-doubt that causes us to act like shy country cousins and step back, but actually to step forward and embrace one another from whatever part of the country we live in. Then these issues, be they economic recessions which occur in a cyclical pattern in a controlled capitalist economy like ours, or the taxation issues that bedevil us as Canadians want more services but we are finding that the cost of paying for them and servicing the debt is too burdensome to continue on its present footing, can be dealt with.

Those of us in this Canadian House of Commons and those who succeed us in subsequent generations are never going to lack any of these specific issues to debate. Debate is the turning of the gears that makes the sound of a country actually working. My concern is the deeper one that I alluded to throughout my remarks. That is the absence of a strong, positive, Canadian cultural experience that gives us the confidence to go forward with all that we are doing so well, with all that we can be so proud of as Canadians, and celebrate it, and salute one another for doing it.

That is why I pointed particularly to the province of Quebec and its phenomenal progress in recent decades because of the intrinsic strength that comes from that shared culture. That, achieved within Canada, shows us all the better way.

[Translation]

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, I found my colleague's speech very interesting. I would like to make a comment about the dynamism in Quebec.

I must remind my colleague that Quebec may be a little more dynamic than some other provinces because,

in a way, we have learned to be suspicious of the federal government. Just remember the referendum of 1980 after which Quebec had to rely only on its own resources and on its own means. It is around that time that we began to show real entrepreneurship and that our businesses began to be really flourishing. That explains in part why Quebec is one of the provinces which can best cope with global and Pan-Canadian competitiveness.

• (1740)

I would really like to ask my colleague if he ever thought about the things that the provinces had in common. We talk here, in this House, of all the differences, of all the things that divide us. I too am an immigrant, in the sense that I chose Canada, but in my case, I chose Quebec. During my trips across Canada, I saw many things that we have in common. I can quote this example: in Quebec, we have a lot of *caisses populaires*, while in the West, they have credit unions or co-ops.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, in Quebec we have also some mistrust towards Ottawa. This same mistrust exists in the West and in British Columbia, and it is a rightful, healthy mistrust. But it is not strong enough to destroy the country. I would even say that with this mistrust, we can still build a country.

Mr. Patrick Boyer (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the NDP member's comments concerning the diverse dimensions of our country. That is the true Canadian spirit.

He is pondering over the Canadian identity and the realities all Canadians must deal with. That is paradoxical but the common reality is found in the Canadian diversity. As George Bernard Shaw said it, paradoxes are truly realities.

I think that the challenge is for Canadians to experiment diversity all across the country. I can see how Quebecers that confine themselves to the Province of Quebec, to that sole environment and life experience, may develop a separatist mentality. As for Canadians living exclusively in the West who never know the incredible experience of visiting the province of Quebec or even Ontario and the Maritimes, they truly show a lack of Canadian spirit.