

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

The Quebec sovereignists use the patriots of 1837–38 rebellion as a weapon of legitimization in their fight for Quebec independence. The sovereignists of today try to demonstrate to their fellow Quebecois that Louis Joseph Papineau and his followers were rebelling against the intransigent tyranny of the British powers, much like the Bloc is doing in this Parliament against the federal powers.

Granted, conditions in Lower Canada during the 1830s were difficult and frustrating for the French Canadian majority, difficult because economic hardship seriously affected the francophone working class, frustrating because the francophone petite bourgeoisie constituted the majority of members in the lower House. Yet these same members had very little say in the financial management of the colony.

● (1900)

What concerns me if this House adopts Motion No. 257 is that we will be playing right into the hands of the Bloc Quebecois as well as those of the Parti Quebecois. Certain parallels can be drawn between the causes fought for in 1837–38 and the present day battle over Canadian unity.

Once again, I will draw upon Mr. Rhéaume's comment to support my argument. Mr. Rhéaume states that economic conditions, especially the lack of control over the purse strings of the colonial treasury were one of the main causes for the 1837–38 rebellion. Today Quebec nationalists complain that they have only partial control over their economy. The essential levers of power rest within the hands of the federal government where the Quebec representatives are a minority.

The Patriotes believed that only full control of all economic levers could permit the French Canadians to survive as a people. The Quebecois nationalist elite uses the same argument today to preserve its language, culture and tradition.

I clearly see comparisons being drawn by Quebecois nationalists between the events of 1837–38 and those unfolding in 1994–95. If this House is seriously fighting for a strong Canada it would be hypocritical for its members to vote in favour of this motion.

Since our colleague for Verchères is very interested in history, as all Canadians should be, let us look back on some of the Patriote commemorative ceremonies which have taken place over the years. Since 1962, the 125th anniversary of the rebellion, commemorative ceremonies held in Montreal in honour of the Saint-Denis victory have taken on a nationalistic overtone. For example in 1970 at the height of the October crisis about 3,000 people rallied at the Patriotes monument. Representatives of the Chevaliers de l'indépendance, as well as those of the FLQ

were on hand. Camille Laurin, leader of the national assembly of the Parti Quebecois, stated:

[Translation]

The most insidious means are used to perpetuate colonialism in Quebec, but Quebec will achieve its independence through peaceful means.

[English]

At a similar celebration in 1973 Francois Albert Angers, one of Quebec's most important proponents of economic sovereignty, asked French Canadians to stand behind the Parti Quebecois so that they could defeat more easily the anglophone political party. Links do exist between Quebec sovereignists and Patriotes commemoration.

In 1977 the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal awarded its Patriote de l'année award to Camille Laurin, the minister who steered Bill 101 through the national assembly. This is no coincidence. The nationalists use the term Patriote de l'année when giving an award to a Parti Quebecois minister who severely restricted, we could almost say outlawed, the use of English in his province. The Parti Quebecois during its last tenure in power also renamed a highway in honour of the Patriotes in addition to declaring the Sunday nearest November 23 as the official day for commemorative ceremonies.

The Parti Quebecois is using the battles of their forefathers during the 1837–38 rebellion to legitimize their struggles against Canadian federalism. Today the term patriote has taken on an almost anti-English anti-federalist connotation in Quebec. Whereas the original Patriotes fought in part to establish responsible government, today's patriots seem to be working toward the demise of this great country of ours.

Louis Joseph Papineau, William Lyon Mackenzie and their followers certainly have enriched Canada's history as have thousands of other men and women. In opposing this motion I do not want to belittle their contribution in any way. However, I am concerned for the message we would be sending out to the Quebecois sovereignists if we legitimized the Patriotes' actions. I therefore urge all members of this House who want to preserve our country to vote against Motion No. 257.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member who just spoke has insulted many Quebecers, unwittingly I am sure, by saying that the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste is a radical or extremist movement. Several million of Quebecers have been members of that movement which has no ties whatsoever with political parties. I shall be brief, Mr. Speaker. Some Liberals are still members of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, and other parties—