

*Government Orders*

never been willing to recognize Quebec's supremacy with regard to culture".

It is not surprising that this government would introduce such a bill. The Prime Minister's whole career has been centred on one important thing: to counter the recognition of Quebec's unique character.

Remember that during the 1980 referendum campaign, he made a lot of promises regarding the Constitution. Since then, he has refused any type of constitutional negotiations with Quebec and is doing everything possible to try and grab powers that have traditionally belonged to Quebec.

Remember also that in 1982, without warning Quebec, the then negotiator who is Prime Minister today secretly concluded, in the middle of the night, a constitutional accord with the English-speaking provinces. The main purpose of this accord was to strip Quebec of an important cultural power, namely the power to legislate on language matters. That is why the National Assembly of Quebec voted unanimously against this federalist attack.

The Meech Lake accord recognized Quebec's unique character. But an ambitious lawyer named Jean Chrétien, who already saw himself as leader of the Liberal Party and future Prime Minister of this country, joined forces with the known enemies of Quebec's unique character, worked hard in secret to kill in the womb any type of affirmation of Quebec's cultural identity and fought ferociously against the distinct society clause. The Prime Minister showed us then who he really is. It is very difficult to believe today that he is and still feels like a true Quebecer.

The refusal by Jean Chrétien's federal government to recognize Quebec's unique character does not surprise me. It is obvious that his government has no desire to see to it that Quebec's culture and language can blossom within the Canadian confederation, but that it would rather see that province's unique character die a slow but sure death.

All Canadians witnessed recently the situation where the Prime Minister tried to have Quebecers pay a double price because their government had wanted to hold a referendum according to their own specificity. That is totally unacceptable. The referendum legislation and election rules are part of the distinctness of Quebec. Its respect for democracy has led Quebec to adopt, in the area of electoral equity, a legislation which is comparable to no other in Canada or elsewhere in the world.

This refusal by the federal government to admit the distinct character of Quebec has serious consequences and generates all kinds of duplication and overlapping.

• (1240)

We must remember that duplication caused by the intrusion of the federal government in the cultural area, which normally is under provincial jurisdiction, cost Canadian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. Acknowledgement of the distinctness of Quebec by the federal government would mean a repatriation of the cultural sector and of all the related budgetary envelopes. It would result in some important savings and would be more attuned to the logic which has been fundamental to Canadian cultural policy for many years.

How can the Governor General explain the dual principle in terms of culture? Clause 4.(2) of the proposed legislation states that the Minister's jurisdiction encompasses jurisdiction over, and I quote:

(j) the formulation of cultural policy as it relates to foreign investment;

In other words, for the last thirty years, Canadian cultural policies have been aimed at limiting foreign investments in the cultural area in order to ensure the survival of the Canadian culture. At the same time, and according to the same fundamental principle, that is the safeguard of the Canadian culture, Canadian governments have tried to impose to the various media a minimum Canadian content and ownership.

According to these principles, the Canadian government is saying that governments must defend their culture, that it must not be left in foreign hands or allowed to be submerged by a foreign culture. Canada should therefore recognize the fact that Quebec is in the best position to defend its culture, which is different from Canada's.

When the subject is Quebec culture, all those high-sounding principles supported, for instance, by the Canadian intellectual elite, fall by the wayside. Then they call it isolationism, tribalism and narrow-mindedness. When one hears such vehement statements, one wonders why Canada, as a sign of protest and to deny any hint of narrow-mindedness and isolationism, does not simply put its culture into the hands of the Americans. If managing their culture is good for Canadians, why would it be so bad for Quebecers? Again, a double standard.

Under Canadian federalism, English Canada has the right to defend its culture against the American invader, but Quebec should drop its own culture, according to the bill before the House today. They want to make us all one nation and deny there are two. There are two nations in this country, and the act to establish the Department of Canadian Heritage should reflect an awareness of the situation in Quebec and the flexibility that Quebec needs to develop and prosper.

This bill contains no guarantees for the French language and culture in Canada. Instead of defending French language and culture, the Department of Canadian Heritage is being used by