

Oral Questions

rather than being based on factual evidence, as an emotional overreaction to amateur videos.

A whole regiment laid low for the misbehaviour of a few. Humiliation for the several hundred remaining members of the airborne as well as every serving or retired member who ever saw duty with the regiment.

Families: wives, daughters, sons, who proudly associated themselves with the regiment now feel tarnished by this ignominious end to their unit. A professional, highly trained and motivated force which should be remembered for claiming the dominion of our north; for the deep respect earned while on duty in Europe and in the Middle East; and for the humanitarian relief provided across many continents. Government, attempting to appear decisive, has made an inappropriate decision.

A proud and capable regiment has been lost from the order of battle and the Canadian taxpayer burdened with a large and unnecessary expense.

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DECADE OF LITERACY

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this decade of the 20th century has been declared by the United Nations as the Decade of Literacy. This is a time to raise our awareness of those Canadians who can neither read nor write.

It is a disturbing fact that nearly three million Canadians are unable to function with basic literary skills. We are now halfway through the Decade of Literacy and inroads are being made by groups like the Movement for Canadian Literacy and ABC Canada.

Learning to read is a golden key which unlocks the door to creativity and independence. One of the greatest satisfactions of my entire life was teaching an adult male to read. He trusted me enough to share his dark secret that he had been faking it. Privately we persisted and a few months later he was on his own, actually reading the daily newspaper. The joy was like the miracle of restoring sight to the blind.

I encourage anyone hearing my voice today who cannot read to take action to seek the help in learning the greatest joy in life, the joy of reading.

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[Translation]

FRANCOPHONES OUTSIDE QUEBEC

Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 19, the PQ government decided to close Quebec's office in Edmonton, thus forcing francophones in the three Prairie Provinces and the Northwest Territories to turn to the Vancouver and Toronto offices for assistance.

• (1415)

On May 27, 1994, the leader of the Bloc Québécois unveiled a policy on francophone and Acadian communities, claiming that after achieving sovereignty, Quebec would strengthen the role of its offices across Canada in promoting Quebec's co-operation programs.

Who is right? The leader of the Bloc Québécois who wants to make more assistance available or the separatist PQ government which closes offices and cuts services to francophones outside Quebec?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

FEDERALISM

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. In a prerferendum speech to the Metropolitan Quebec Chamber of Commerce, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said, and I quote: "—no one in Canada is going to discuss the status quo. There will be no more status quo. There will be major changes—".

Does this statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs mean that the Prime Minister has changed his mind and that his government will now support major changes in the way federalism operates, this after doggedly defending the status quo?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development is introducing major changes in the way unemployment insurance and social programs operate. Who is opposed to these changes? Who wants to keep the status quo?

An hon. member: The Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): The Bloc Québécois, exactly.

When the Minister of Finance suggests ways to improve our society, who wants to keep the status quo? Always the Bloc Québécois.

Our federalism is flexible. We will make some adjustments, but we do not have to change the constitution to make those adjustments. We must be practical and tackle one problem at a time, in the best interests of all Canadians.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seriously. The Prime Minister should take this seriously.

If it is so easy to transform Canada by signing administrative agreements and if the Prime Minister is sincere about this, could he explain why, fifteen months after his party came to power, he has yet to recognize the unanimous demands for full jurisdiction