

Government Orders

• (1050)

I would like to ask him whether he happens to know what percentage of national parks are located in Quebec, what the value is of the various national parks outside Quebec and those inside Quebec, and the consequences this may have.

While I was listening to the hon. member's speech, which was brilliant, and while I was listening to the parliamentary secretary to the minister, because the minister is off somewhere else while we are having this debate—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has been in the House for a number of years and I fail to see why he insists on commenting on the presence or absence of a member or minister in this House. I think there is really no excuse for that, since the Minister of State for the Environment and the parliamentary secretary are both in the House. I think this is an inappropriate attempt to make a fuss.

I will let the hon. member finish his question and give the hon. member for Skeena a chance to respond.

The hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stansstead.

Mr. Gérin: You are perfectly right, Madam Speaker. It is Friday and after a rather long week during which the government has been playing its procedural tricks, we overlooked certain rules. You are right and I am looking forward to seeing the minister in the House, in order to ask him some very specific questions.

Meanwhile, you are perfectly right, and I will put my question to the hon. member. If, as expected, Quebec's sovereignty becomes a fact, and I think it will, because those federal offers will never be made, I would like to ask him whether he agrees that the national park to be created in his riding or the territories that will be created and which have a certain value, should remain the property of British Columbia, and that this should be absolutely clear? Does he agree that the various assets located in the territory of the province of Quebec should remain, after Quebec has become sovereign, the property, in no uncertain terms, of the province of Quebec, without any obligation to pay compensation of any kind?

I would appreciate an answer to these two questions. And I again wish to congratulate him on this auspicious occasion. I have known the hon. member for a number of years. I know he has always had a passionate interest in the environment. He has been a member of practically every committee on the environment and has worked very hard. As a member of this House he is very dedicated to his province, to environmental issues and to his riding. He is an example to all members of this House.

[*English*]

Mr. Fulton: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend for the question. The issue that he raised first, in terms of the amount of land designated as what are called national parks in the province of Quebec, is a shame to this country. Less than one-third of 1 per cent of the land in the province of Quebec is designated as a national park.

I have looked into it a bit, and it has long puzzled me why so little effort has been made at the national level to achieve the kind of co-operation that there should have been over a long period of time for the designation of lands. Frankly, a considerable amount of the existing friction between the First Nations in Quebec, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Quebec is related to the lack of serious attention paid by Canada and the Government of Quebec to issues of title, in terms of First Nations, but also in terms of lands to be designated as parks.

Not only is this true of areas set aside and designated as national parks in Quebec, but as well Quebec has the second lowest level of all the provinces in terms of areas of provincial significance protected within the provincial parks system.

If we were to achieve what this House unanimously voted for just one year ago in June—a motion that I made and which was ultimately remade by the Minister of the Environment and the member for LaSalle—Émard—to set aside 12 per cent of Canada by the year 2000 our greatest single challenge would be in Quebec, despite having a Prime Minister from Quebec for 24 of the past 25 years. There has been no serious action to designate the areas of incredible beauty and incredible national, regional, and world-wide significance in that enormous and beautiful province.