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Wednesday, January 19, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 19, 1994

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

The Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1993.

[*Translation*]

I remind hon. members that, under Standing Order 108(3)(e), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

[*English*]

It being two o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

May I say a few words, more to give my colleagues information than anything else. I met earlier with the whips and through their negotiations and after discussions with me it was decided that we are to operate on a certain pattern for the next few days while negotiations are continued with the whips and the House leaders.

With regard to Standing Order 31 statements it has been agreed that we are to begin this way: We will have nine interventions by the government, three by the Official Opposition, three by the Reform Party, and we will work in the independents as we go along. This will be brought forth a little bit later.

As for the question period, at least for the next few days—

An hon. member: Order.

The Speaker: I thought the House was going to be raucous; it is the gallery I have to worry about now. We are going to get that cleared up.

(1405)

For the next few days we are to follow, subject to negotiation with the whips and the House leaders, an arrangement on which we will come to a decision with regard to the layout of the question period.

With that in mind, I am going to conduct question period on the basis of what we set up for this kind of situation in the last Parliament. We will go from here.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I welcome you and all members of the House to a great job with many descriptions.

Today as Canadians we have many great challenges facing us, which also means that we have many great opportunities. Let us be very mindful that it is our responsibility to tackle the challenges of today with the same dedication, determination, courage and foresight as those early pioneers who developed this great country God has given to us as a gift.

On behalf of all Canadians it is up to us to build a human infrastructure into our nation in the form of human bridges of understanding among regions of the country, bridges between suffering and comfort, bridges between unemployment and employment, bridges among cultures based on a proud but humble Canadian spirit.

As Pearl McInnis said: "I have no yesterdays. Time took them away. Tomorrow may not be but I have today". Let us work toward a greater Canada and a better world. Welcome to these new challenges.

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[*Translation*]

LOS ANGELES EARTHQUAKE

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, speaking on my own behalf and on behalf of the Official Opposition, I

S. O. 31

wish to extend my sincere condolences to the families in Los Angeles who recently suffered the loss of a loved one.

Upon seeing the damage caused by the earthquake, we realized the extent of the disaster and what a terrible experience it must have been for the people in the area.

These are trying times for the people of Los Angeles, and we deeply sympathize with their suffering as a result of this ordeal. However, we know they will show much courage in the face of adversity.

A number of us have relatives or friends living in Los Angeles, and we therefore urge the Canadian government to do whatever is necessary to ensure the safety of Canadians and Quebecers who are still there and give them any support they may require to overcome this calamity.

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[English]

LOS ANGELES EARTHQUAKE

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today with a great deal of pride and apprehension and a deep sense of duty, honour and responsibility.

My statement echoes the statement of my colleague preceding. I would ask that all members of the House recognize the suffering that has gone on in Los Angeles with our neighbours to the south.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations has proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family.

Communities and organizations including governments around the world are planning activities this year to recognize the importance of the family today.

The UN refers to the family as a basic unit of society which is appreciated for its fundamental role in the building of a society as well as for the important socioeconomic functions that it performs.

In spite of the many challenges it has undergone, the family continues to provide the natural framework for the emotional, financial and material support essential to the growth of its members, particularly children, and for the care of other dependents including the elderly, the disabled and the infirm.

[Translation]

The family continues to play an important role in preserving and promoting the cultural values we all cherish.

The family teaches, trains and motivates its members, and contributes to the progress of our society.

(1410)

I am proud of what is being done by the government to improve those structures the family needs, and there was proof of further progress in the Throne Speech yesterday.

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[English]

LABOTIX AUTOMATION

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker, let us start 1994 with an example of Canadians already solving problems of the 21st century.

Labotix Automation has a new plant in Peterborough to make robot-like equipment for testing medical, agricultural and environmental samples.

The Canadians in this Canadian company are addressing concerns we have about AIDS, our national blood supply, environmental pollution and the cost of medicare. Their technology allows the sampling of all kinds of fluids. They are showing how we can compete in the global market by putting this quality Peterborough product into 80 nations. They are also showing how to create jobs and train young Canadians. Their success is based on the talents of young Canadian engineers, technologists and computer people.

In Peterborough, Canadians are facing the next century with confidence.

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[Translation]

AMATEUR SPORT

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies): Mr. Speaker, as the press revealed last week, in Canadian amateur sport—and I am referring to Team Canada, this country's national hockey team which will defend Canada's honour in Lillehammer—Quebecers are once again suffering discrimination as a result of racial prejudice and stereotyping.

On behalf of all Quebecers and all Canadians, I demand that the government take specific steps to put an end to this discrimination so that all Quebecers, like everybody else, will have a chance to be on the team.

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[English]

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, in response to the Reform caucus report on parliamentary pay, perks and pensions, the government has advanced a plan to reduce certain benefits on Parliament Hill. The Gagliano report is a commendable first step that will save the taxpayers of Canada some significant dollars and will be supported on this side of the House.

However there are significant actions that still must be taken. Let me indicate two. Each member of Parliament continues to receive a tax-free, non-receiptable expense allowance starting at \$21,300 a year. This must be reformed. Also taxpayers are insisting on real, comprehensive reform to MPs' and senators' pensions, not tinkering.

Canadians are demanding reductions to taxpayers' contributions that are at least \$10 million in excess per year by private sector standards and a benefit structure that has created actuarial liabilities of nearly \$200 million.

The taxpayers will be watching and we will be watching.

* * *

IMP AEROSPACE COMPONENTS LTD.

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker, IMP Aerospace Components Ltd., a manufacturing plant in Amherst, Nova Scotia, is on strike. Since World War II, Amherst Aerospace has been a long-time and valued employer in the community, employing more than 150 people in the manufacture of aerospace components.

The dispute between management and union is very complex and is escalating daily since talks broke off in mid-December.

IMP's new facility was officially opened only last year with the help of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money both federally and provincially.

I implore management to return to the bargaining table as quickly as possible and offer my assistance to end this strike which is causing hardship and mistrust in the lives of the people of Amherst.

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CAMBRIDGE

Mr. Janko Peric (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, on October 25, 1993 I was honoured to be elected by the people of Cambridge, North Dumfries and south Kitchener in the federal riding of Cambridge. What makes this election special to me is that I am the first Croatian-born Canadian to be elected to the House of Commons.

(1415)

In 1968 I came to this country in search of better opportunity, a better life. I found it here. For that I am grateful and thankful to Canada and the Canadian people.

As a Croatian I am a brother to all people and as a Canadian I am a big brother to all people.

Vive le Canada. Long live Canada. Zivila Canada.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a matter of great concern to all our small and medium sized business sectors in Durham and indeed in all of Canada. These sectors have contributed between 75 per cent and 83 per cent of all new employment growth in the immediate past. In addition a preponderance of our economy is controlled from outside our borders.

I suggest that through incentives and support for small and medium sized businesses in areas of new technologies that Canadians can gain control of their economy. We must create new sources of capital, and I would point to the existence of a great capital base of pension funds and other savings vehicles as good sources of long-term capital which could underpin long-term growth in our economy.

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[Translation]

MIL DAVIE SHIPYARDS

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Lévis, I welcome this opportunity to inform the members of this House of the alarming situation at the MIL Davie shipyards.

At the beginning of 1993, there were 3,500 employees, and now there are only 2,400 left. Since lay-offs are taking place at a rate of one hundred a week, the number of employees may drop to 500 in a matter of months. If nothing is done pretty soon, this will mean an economic loss of \$600 million for the Quebec City area.

The company has prepared a plan for conversion from military to civilian business, but MIL Davie needs contracts to cover the transition to competing at the international level.

I would therefore ask the government to give serious consideration to awarding the company the contract for building the Magdalen Islands ferry and to helping it develop the so-called "smart ship".

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[English]

FIREARMS

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, there has been a growing torrent of inquiries regarding the new regulations under Bill C-17 restricting accessibility of firearms acquisition certificates.

I have information that while the new regulations were originally to go into effect June 30, 1993 they were deferred to January 1 of this year so that the program could be implemented. Yet well into the third week of January there is mass confusion and frustration among firearms owners, RCMP and firearm

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safety education training. It would appear that there has been inadequate consultation and instruction among the federal justice department, the chief provincial firearms officers and the RCMP.

While the Canadian public supports firearms regulations and gun owners are the first to agree with the necessity of safety, if the confusion and misinformation currently being distributed causes law-abiding citizens who own firearms to decide not to register, what has the law achieved?

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SRI GURU GOBIND SINGH JI

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton): Mr. Speaker, today is the 328th birthday of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the 10th guru of the Sikh religion. He sacrificed his father, his sons and himself to preserve the faith of his people.

It is the Sikh duty to walk in the footsteps of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji for the welfare of all human beings.

Let us remember the 10th guru by his belief that all persons are the same though they appear different: the bright, the dark, the ugly and the beautiful.

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(1420)

BROCKVILLE

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Mr. Speaker, here in the capital a few weeks ago my home town, the small city of Brockville, was presented with the national municipal award for environmental leadership.

Brockville was chosen for the prestigious award over 15 other Canadian cities. Brockville was chosen for its pioneering of a successful recycling program several years ago. This successful program and other measures have resulted in an extension of several years to the city's landfill site. It is truly a success story.

I want to extend my congratulations to Mayor Doran, all the councillors, as well as all the citizens of Brockville who participated. They improved the environment and brought positive recognition to the city of Brockville.

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FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, let me offer my personal congratulations and those of the constituency I represent, Thunder Bay—Nipigon. Our congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, and our very best wishes. May I, on behalf of the people I represent, welcome you to visit with us in Thunder Bay at your earliest convenience.

There are many issues facing this government. I can think of no more serious issue than the protection of our natural resources, particularly our forestry industry.

The forestry industry is Canada's largest industry. There are over three-quarters of a million jobs as a direct result of our forestry industry which creates over \$40 billion in wealth in this country. It is our largest single export commodity.

I ask all members of this House, my colleagues from the Bloc Quebecois, the Reform Party and the New Democratic Party to strongly endorse a policy of reforestation in this country that will protect the forestry industry in Canada, not only for our generation but for generations to come.

The Speaker: Colleagues, the Chair takes note that I have gone overtime because I used extra time at the beginning. It would be the intention of the Chair, with your agreement of course, to cut off the statements precisely at 2.15 p.m. I propose to do that tomorrow.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[Translation]***SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday, the federal debt went above the \$500 billion mark. In general, people were disappointed with the Throne Speech in that there was no mention of any true resolve on the part of the government to address with determination the issue of deficit reduction. The Throne Speech confirmed all of the fears about the threats facing our social programs.

Are we to understand from the Throne Speech that the government, lacking the courage to make the hard choices that are necessary, has decided to reduce the deficit at the expense of the less fortunate by cutting funding to social programs?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the Leader of the Opposition once again that the government has a very clear program for deficit reduction and that the Minister of Finance will be tabling a budget next month. When the Minister of Finance met with his provincial counterparts and when I myself met with the provincial premiers in December, we made it very clear that we had no intention of reducing transfer payments to the provinces.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I take what the Prime Minister just said as a commitment from the highest-ranking law-maker in the land. But how can we take this commitment seriously when we contrast it with a statement made recently by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who publicly said he would like to see health care

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expenditures reduced by 20 per cent? Who are we to believe? The Prime Minister or the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there is no contradiction here. If we are able, working in co-operation with the provinces, to reduce the health care expenditures of all levels of government, then both the provinces and the federal government will save money.

(1425)

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it occurs to me that the Prime Minister is once again dangling the sword of Damocles over social programs since he has just said that the objective he is pursuing along with the provinces is to reduce health care expenditures. This is precisely the kind of half-truth that spreads fear among the public.

Is the Prime Minister serious about really wanting to cut expenditures and trim government fat and, if so, will he agree to set up a special committee of parliamentarians from this House with an urgent and detailed mandate to review all expenditures and all departmental budgetary items and to report back to the public? Its goal would be to reduce government spending, to cut the deficit and to quell this monster without touching social programs.

[English]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we are willing to work with all the parties of this House to make sure that we find the cuts needed to reduce the deficit.

The finance committee will be meeting very soon. The different committees will have the opportunity to look at the estimates of every department. We will look at every aspect of the government operations and make sure to review the expenditures.

I do not think it is possible, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition is trying to tell us, to have your cake and eat it too. We have to look at everything.

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*[Translation]***TAXATION**

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, to pursue this line of questioning, so far the federal government has not demonstrated a firm commitment towards reforming the Canadian tax system to address blatant unfairness and inequities. It is more concerned with testing the public opinion left and right about possible deep cuts pretty well across the board, but especially in social programs, while sparing the rich.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Is the Minister backing away from undertaking as a matter of urgency a serious

and thorough reform of the Canadian tax system to better distribute the burden among Quebec and Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating my colleague on his first question before this House. As he knows, consultations are underway, in fact the most extensive ones ever carried out in this country regarding a budget.

Within this framework, the Canadian people have told us that they wanted radical changes in many government programs, including taxation, and that is what we have set out to do.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Finance is indeed firmly committed to reform, is he prepared to undertake today to eliminate immediately this horrible family trust system which benefits only the richest of the rich, not the poorest of the poor in our society?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): Mr. Speaker, as my honourable colleague knows full well, I will be tabling shortly before this House the federal budget, in which he will no doubt find an answer to his questions.

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*[English]***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

At the same time that we are facing record debt and taxation levels to which the hon. member has just referred, we are also facing record levels of unemployment. Many economists and business people feel there is a direct connection between the two, that high debt and taxes kill private sector job creation.

Would the Prime Minister give the House the government's view on the connection between high record levels of debt and high record levels of unemployment and tell us whether the government believes that deficit cutting is essential to private sector job creation.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we understand that we have a huge debt in Canada. Yesterday apparently we surpassed the fantastic figure of \$500 billion. It is a big burden that the Conservative Party left as a legacy with which we must start our work today. It is a reality and it is a big problem for the nation.

(1430)

There are two ways we can solve this problem and it will take some time. We have to cut expenditures but the main thing we can do to reduce the debt is to make sure that there are jobs in Canada for Canadians so that they can work and produce growth

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and produce taxes. That is the way we want to approach the problem.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): I think all members agree with your reply but my question was: Is there a direct connection between the—

The Speaker: Order. I know we are all new to the House but would you please address your questions and your statements directly to the Chair.

Mr. Manning: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker, on the same subject of deficits and jobs.

This has come to us. It is an inquiry received on our question fax line from Dr. Dean P. Eyre of Ottawa. He asked the government this question. He said: "The government proposes to spend \$6 billion on infrastructure and create 65,000 jobs. Has the government calculated how many jobs might have been created if that \$6 billion were simply cut from the taxes of individuals, property owners and small businesses?"

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): The questioners through the leader of the Reform Party should know that only \$2 billion of the \$6 billion is coming from the federal treasury, so it will have reduced only the deficit of the federal government. This infrastructure program is a big success.

The mayor of Calgary is very enthusiastic about this program, as are the mayors of Hamilton, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria, and Shawinigan, Quebec.

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[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Throne Speech the government really disappointed Quebecers and Canadians, who were expecting, after the election campaign's theme of "jobs, jobs, jobs", a true job creation program. In fact, no concrete initiatives were announced, except for the infrastructure program, which is inadequate to our needs.

My question is for Mr. Axworthy who is responsible for human resources development.

An hon. member: The Minister of Human Resources.

Mrs. Lalonde: The Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Axworthy.

An hon. member: No, you are not allowed to mention his name.

Mrs. Lalonde: I cannot name him. Mr. Speaker, I will not name the minister.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, would the minister reassure everybody by telling us when the government will finally do

something and which initiatives it will take to help the many Quebecers and Canadians who want to work but who cannot find jobs?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate you as the new Speaker of the House, which is a difficult task to assume.

I also want to congratulate the hon. member for Mercier for her interest in this issue. I hope that we will have many opportunities to exchange our views, for the benefit of all Canadians.

As the hon. members will know, the Throne Speech includes several initiatives and measures. For example, the Youth Service Corps is a very important tool to put young Canadians to work. We will also set up a training program for all Canadians. I believe this can provide a good solution to the important problems which our young people are facing.

We have also announced a comprehensive reform of our social security system.

(1435)

This is a good response to the concerns voiced by the poor and it will bring about the essential changes needed to develop an employment program for a large number of Canadians.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, this answer is totally unsatisfactory. I have a supplementary question for the minister. Why did he agree to the \$800 million increase in UI contributions, given the disastrous effect this measure will have on the economy, and considering that the government invests only \$1 billion a year in the infrastructure program?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure what the exact question is but as I tried to outline to the hon. member I will be very glad to provide her with a full explanation of the measures.

In the throne speech we detailed very specific commitments that are made in the red book for providing employment for young people and for the very serious problem of transition from school to work.

The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Industry have outlined a number of measures to help create employment in the small business sector and in high technology to help the provinces develop new initiatives.

As the hon. member will know, we are presenting a series of more detailed explanations. Each minister will be giving an outline of those during the reply to the speech from the throne. I am sure that after the hon. member has had an occasion to listen to the excellent speeches presented by my colleagues she will

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fully understand the major commitment we in this government have to jobs.

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AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The Auditor General tabled his report today. In it he has pointed out that unless some real changes are made the federal debt, that is, the federal debt alone and not the national debt, will reach 100 per cent of the gross domestic product by the year 2008.

The Auditor General has red flagged the situation as being of serious concern. He has stated in his report: "Hard choices lie ahead".

The speech from the throne has focused on spending programs with no recognition of the serious fiscal situation facing this country.

Is the Minister of Finance now able to assure Canadians that deficit reduction is this country's number one priority rather than introducing more spending programs as we heard about yesterday?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development - Quebec): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that deficit reduction is a major priority of this government.

There is no doubt that we share the views largely expressed by the Auditor General. We did so in a matter of weeks after taking office. There is no doubt, as well, as the Prime Minister said so well in his opening remarks that we are not going to get the deficit reduction unless we also understand that economics is about people and that this country needs jobs.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, we understand that this country certainly does need jobs.

However, having looked at and read through the report, it would appear that there are many areas where this government can take charge of its own finances and ensure that money that is currently being wasted and misspent is available for Canadians.

Will the Minister of Finance assure us that he will look at the Auditor General's report and implement the recommendations there to ensure that Canadian taxpayers' money is spent for the best benefit of this country?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development - Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite and I certainly share one thing in common. When I first came to the House and was up I also forgot to ask my question.

The hon. member can rest assured that we are going to take the comments of the Auditor General very seriously, especially since he is looking at us from up there. We have already begun to do so.

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(1440)

[*Translation*]

MANPOWER PROGRAMS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, there is a broad consensus in Quebec on eliminating costly administrative duplication in manpower programs. Unions, management, the government and hundreds of thousands of unemployed Quebecers agree. The 26,000 Quebecers waiting for occupational training, even though skilled jobs are available, also agree.

My question for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is as follows: Does he intend to conclude an agreement with the Government of Quebec as soon as possible on eliminating this costly duplication and thus respect the commitment which the Prime Minister made at the first ministers' summit on December 21, and the commitment which he himself made in early December?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal): Mr. Speaker, our government is in full agreement with eliminating overlap and duplication so as to reduce the cost of government. We said that in the throne speech and we obtained an agreement to that effect at the first ministers' conference.

As for an agreement on occupational training, my colleague, the Minister of Human Resources Development, has already discussed this with his colleague who is now Quebec's finance minister but who then was responsible for the manpower agreement, and he is continuing with the discussions.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, since experts say that eliminating these overlaps would save at least some \$250 million a year from the moment the agreement is reached and signed, would the minister not agree that for a cash-strapped government, it is time for him, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues to get with it as soon as possible?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal): Mr. Speaker, I feel that we are already with it because we intend to cut government spending by much more than \$250 million by reducing overlap.

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[English]

(1445)

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the infrastructure program.

At the beginning of this month the government announced the program's first project, a convention centre in Quebec City. Since then many Canadians have wondered how this project was approved prior to the government's announcement on the criteria for qualification.

I would like the minister to explain to this House by what criteria and by what process the project in Quebec City was approved.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec had for some time been in negotiations with the previous government here in Ottawa with respect to the project of the convention centre in Quebec City. It was anxious because of the change in leadership coming in the Government of Quebec to be able to bring the matter to a head. The premiers had been here on December 21 and had come to an agreement about the the program. They in fact unanimously agreed to be participants in the infrastructure program.

We then said to the Quebec government that it was conditional—and I want to point out that it is conditional upon signing the formal agreement—that the project would be one that could proceed.

Once the formal agreement is signed the project will in fact have to go through all of the tests required. We already have, however, through the Federal Economic Development Agency in Quebec, processed the application on an informal basis. I must say that it is an excellent project. It will put over 1,000 people to work in construction jobs and create more than 400 long-term jobs after that. It is a project that will help get the people in Quebec City, the province of Quebec and Canadians to work and to work fast.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for his clarification. Obviously this was a case of a political announcement occurring before this House was consulted and before criteria were publicly known. It creates the impression that we have another pork-barrel program. What action is the minister going to take to ensure that this type of situation does not occur in the future and what precisely did he do about the fact that the announcement was as ill timed as it was?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, this is going to be a very open and transparent program. Information has been supplied to all members of the House with respect to the criteria under which the projects will be examined. The projects are not initiated at the federal level even though the program has been. The projects are initiated at the municipal level and are designed to meet the priorities of local government and the provincial government.

That is what we have done in the case of this project to meet the priorities and the needs of the province of Quebec and the people of Quebec City and with the full support, I might add, of the mayor of Quebec City, members of the Quebec caucus and the Quebec government. I believe that is a good example of how we can get all levels of government together. It is the kind of thing we want to do to make sure this program succeeds, ensure that it be very open and transparent and in fact avoid the very kinds of concerns the member has.

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[Translation]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. Does the Minister responsible for the Treasury Board intend to react to the request made by the Auditor General who, year after year, has revealed cases of income tax revenue lost as a result of the use of tax shelters, and does he intend to give the Auditor General a clear mandate to evaluate what these tax shelters cost the Federal Treasury?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, the government, as I think was indicated previously by my colleague the Minister of Finance, finds itself very substantially in agreement with most of the observations that have been made in the Auditor General's report. Even though those observations relate to what went on previous to this government taking office, nevertheless it is the responsibility of this government to make sure we respond to the concerns the member has raised.

Indeed, we have already done so to a great extent in things like the opening up of the budget process which my colleague talked about earlier and streamlining the decisions in cabinet and various other programs that have been put forward by the Prime Minister to reduce the costs of operation of different ministries, the size of political perks and many other things. We have responded to some of the concerns the member has raised.

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We are going to continue to take note and look into all of these matters. I am sure we will be able to come back to the hon. member and to this House with some further observations and suggestions as to how we can meet many of these requests of the Auditor General.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General says in the report tabled today that it may cost Canadian taxpayers another \$1.2 billion in income tax revenues lost in the resource sector and the petroleum and mining industries.

Here is a case that was mentioned by the Auditor General. After 14 years of dispute, litigation, negotiation and discussion, there is still no consensus on how the profits of these corporations should be calculated.

How does the minister intend to end this judicial saga, which has already cost Canadian taxpayers a great deal, recover the amounts outstanding, and plug these expensive tax loopholes once and for all?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): As far as natural resources are concerned, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was referring to a specific case and, in fact, the government acted very quickly once the dispute was settled.

As far as tax shelters are concerned, we have already said that everything was on the table and that we would take a long, hard look at all existing loopholes and exemptions. Considering the hon. member's question, I hope the Bloc québécois will support us when we bring down the budget in this House.

* * *

[*English*]

REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, this is a question for the Minister of Finance. As the minister is no doubt aware, many Canadians rely heavily on their RRSP accounts for their eventual retirement. That is why the statement made in December by the minister's parliamentary secretary concerning a review of the system has caused so much concern among Canadians.

(1450)

Will the minister please tell Canadians unequivocally that this government will not jeopardize their financial future by further limiting contributions to RRSPs?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): Mr. Speaker, I find that in government one is on one's feet more than in opposition.

The government said in the pre-budget consultations that it is reviewing not only every line of government expenditure but really all government policy. Certainly the matters to which the member has made reference are part of that review.

I can tell the member however that this government will never do anything that will put into jeopardy Canadians' retirement income. What we are going to do is make sure that the tax system in this country treats everyone fairly and equitably.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary for the Minister of Finance.

Will he guarantee or at least allay the fears of the Canadian people that he is going to continue the RRSP and that it is not going to be a tax concession to be reduced but rather a personal retirement safety net that is to be encouraged for these people in the future?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to my hon. friend that his supplementary is exactly the same as his first question and my answer must be the same, that RRSPs are an important part of the retirement savings program in this country. However we are in the process of reviewing all policies and there really are no exceptions.

When we bring down the budget my colleague's questions will be answered at that time.

* * *

ROUGE RIVER VALLEY

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage concerning Scarborough's Rouge River Valley.

The minister will be aware of the existing commitment to negotiate with the Ontario government to protect this 10,000 acre area and the federal government's \$10 million commitment for conservation of the Rouge Valley.

Will the minister confirm that the federal government remains committed to those objectives? Will he update the House on the negotiations with the province and provide assurances that further federal participation would be considered for this large urban environmental undertaking?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River is quite right in reminding us of the federal government's support for this wonderful park which was created in 1988 by a decision of the previous government.

The government remains committed to the creation of the park. It is a project which is a good illustration of the kind of co-operation there can be between the federal government, the provincial governments and private organizations.

Oral Questions

Part of the federal government's contribution in the current fiscal year has been expended for the acquisition of the nationally significant Bead Hill aboriginal history site. It is the intention to bring this site into the Rouge River park when the necessary arrangements have been made.

* * *

[Translation]

TOBACCO TAXES

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Last night's news and this morning's papers reported that the federal government was not in favour of the Quebec government's proposal to reduce tobacco taxes as a way of eliminating smuggling. Can the Minister of Finance confirm that what the Finance Department spokesperson said is official government policy and therefore that Ottawa rejects the Quebec government's position of reducing the tax rate on tobacco as a way of eliminating the scourge of smuggling?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I fully agree with my friend that smuggling really is a scourge that must be dealt with. Certainly, considering the discussions and measures taken by my colleagues, the Solicitor General and the Minister of National Revenue, the laws which already exist will really have to be enforced.

That being said, there is no doubt that one option is to lower tobacco taxes and Quebec has put forward the case for it very well. That is an option to consider, but as you know, it will have to be coordinated with all the provinces or at least most of the provinces concerned.

(1455)

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance referred to other possible options, one of them being enforcement.

Can the Minister of Finance give us specifics on new enforcement measures that could be more effective in solving a problem which has gone on for a very long time?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is up to my colleagues, the Minister of National Revenue and the Solicitor General, to act on this. I believe that the Minister of National Revenue intends to make an announcement on it. I will let him speak about this at the appropriate time.

[English]

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Last Sunday CTV disclosed the results of an internal study by CIDA in which nearly all of the Canadian advisers received a failing grade. Nearly 80 per cent of the 1,400 technical advisers interviewed were rated as ineffective.

On behalf of millions of hard-pressed Canadian taxpayers I would like to ask the minister precisely what he intends to do to end this enormous waste of public funds.

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the hon. member that the interview given by CTV was in relation to projects that took place some time ago. In fact CIDA has been aware of the situation.

Measures have been taken to correct the situation and hopefully in the future projects of this kind will be done in better fashion and will be more productive.

* * *

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Some allegations have been made to the effect that the brutal crackdown by the federal Mexican army to quell the revolt of peasants and zapatist infantrymen violates human rights in several ways. Indeed, several observers have mentioned that people have disappeared, have been murdered or have been intimidated.

Can the minister tell us what is the government's official position regarding this issue, and can he tell us if he has asked the Mexican government to ensure that human rights are respected and protected?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that representations have been made by Canadian officials to the Mexican authorities. The Canadian ambassador to Mexico has met with the minister of Foreign Affairs of that country to inform him of our concerns.

There is no doubt that the Canadian delegations which are now in Mexico will have the opportunity to meet officials from my department. In fact, a group has already met with the Secretary of State to discuss issues relating to Latin America. Later this week, I myself will meet with Mr. Ovide Mercredi

Oral Questions

when he returns from his visit to Mexico, and I hope to discuss this issue very soon with the Mexican ambassador in Ottawa.

Obviously, we must take a very careful look at the situation. A great number of people have died and we certainly deplore that, but it is very important to let the Mexican authorities take appropriate measures to solve the problem, in their own country.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that I share the minister's concerns, and our party will support every effort made by the minister to protect human rights. However, I would like to know if, when he talks about taking a very careful look, the minister considers that trade has nothing to do with human rights and that the uprising of natives is but an unavoidable adjustment episode in a period of economic development?

[English]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is important to remind all hon. members in this House that in 1990 President Salinas created the National Commission of Human Rights which is now entrenched by law. We believe the Mexican authorities themselves want to take measures to ensure that human rights are respected in their country.

(1500)

Second, I want to assure hon. members that through the NAFTA Canada will now be working more closely on a number of issues with our Mexican friends. We hope the criteria established here in Canada and in the United States in regard to human rights will be followed by the Mexicans.

Clearly through NAFTA we could be in a position to help the situation there. Hopefully the Mexicans will involve their people in this process and those who are poorer than others will benefit from NAFTA.

* * *

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

In the throne speech the government stated that it would replace the goods and services tax. It did not outline any specifics or set out any proposed timetable.

Will the minister please tell members of this House and thereby all Canadians what he knows to this date about the substance of his party's new proposed tax?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, may I congratulate you on your position and congratulate the member on his question.

Time is short. I would be unable to tell the House in the time available everything I know on this subject. I will say, however,

that the Prime Minister has made it very clear that the goods and services tax is to go. A replacement obviously must be found because the government and the country needs the money and the revenue. Therefore, the process for eliminating the tax and finding an appropriate new tax will indeed be announced in due course by my colleague, the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of National Revenue rule out categorically in this House today that any tax reform or tax invented to replace the GST will not in fact simply be an increase in taxes?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly the wish of everybody on this side of the House, and I am sure the other, that the burden of taxation on the Canadian public be reduced rather than increased.

However, as has been already discussed today in this House by many members, including the leaders of all parties, we have a problem of deficit, we have a problem of debt, and we can make no such promise at this time that there can be no change in tax levels in any particular area of taxation.

We trust that we can in fact deal with deficit and deal with debt and at the same time have no increase in taxation levels.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, today in his annual report the Auditor General stressed the need for reconciling the convention of budget secrecy with open consultation in debate to allow greater parliamentary input before budgetary decisions are made.

Will the Minister of Finance inform the House as to his position on opening up the process to provide an opportunity for greater input earlier in the process to enhance the participation of members as well as ordinary Canadians in the very important task of dealing with Canada's debt and deficit?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): Mr. Speaker, the member's question is quite obviously very much in the line that this government wants to take and we certainly do support the recommendations of the Auditor General.

We are committed to the elimination of budget secrecy, to open budgeting. As the House was not meeting, the announcement of the deficit was made not by a press release but at a meeting at the University of Montreal involving students from that university and McGill.

We had a public meeting of 40 economists from across the country who dealt with the economic projections and where the country was going. We had a very successful pre-budget consultation meeting in Halifax last week. We expect to have an

Oral Questions

equally successful one in Montreal this week followed by one in Toronto and one in Calgary.

When there is more time leading to the following budget for 1995 we expect to be able to do even more public consultation.

In terms of this House, we are going to remain faithful, as we are in other things, to the concepts and principles set out in the red book.

(1505)

As the Prime Minister and the House leader have said, it will be a substantially enhanced role for the finance committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Martin (LaSalle-Émard): That was the Reform prime minister.

The finance committee will be given the opportunity to hold public hearings and will play a major role in the development of the budget. All members of this House are invited to attend the four consultation meetings that have been announced.

Also, after discussion with the House leader, who I believe will be discussing with his opposite numbers, we, understanding that there is a very short period of time, would like to call for a one day pre-budget debate, which would be the first time it has ever been held, so that all members can give us their views on what the budget should do, along with ordinary Canadians.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Many Canadians who voted for the government were disappointed that one of the first things the government concerned about job creation did was to implement the North American Free Trade Agreement which many regard as an agreement that makes it more difficult for the government to create jobs and to protect existing jobs.

Following up on the question raised earlier with respect to events in Mexico, an interesting exchange in which those who were against NAFTA defended it and those who were for it criticized it, what does the government intend to do about the situation in Mexico? What is the government prepared to do if the human rights situation does not improve in Mexico?

Are we going to continue in this agreement regardless of what the Mexican army and government do to people who feel these agreements are destroying their lives?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reply that in the red book we had a very definitive program regarding the need for the improvements to NAFTA before we signed. We managed to get the improvements that we wanted so we were in a position to sign.

Of course as the Minister of Foreign Affairs said, we are following very closely what is happening at this moment in Mexico. We are putting pressure on its government to respect human rights. We will keep pressing.

However, there are a lot of hypothetical questions in the question the member has put to which I am not in a position to reply. We have to see how the situation develops there. We have confidence that the grievances that exist in that society have no relation to the signing of NAFTA.

The Speaker: The Chair is aware that we went a little over. I signified the intention of the Chair to cut off question period precisely at three o'clock. We will have one final short question.

* * *

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of a question from the other side, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

First, I want to thank the minister for his work on behalf of Canadian farmers to date. He must be aware of the anxiety being felt in the dairy community regarding his negotiations with the Americans on ice cream and yogurt.

Canadian dairy farmers want the government to stand up to the Americans and not to cave in on their unreasonable request for zero tariffs on these products immediately.

What specific action is the minister prepared to take to assure the survival of a viable Canadian dairy industry? Is there a resolution to the problem that will help the Canadian dairy farmer?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food): Mr. Speaker, I certainly thank the hon. member for the question.

Since Canada and the United States are continuing to discuss possible solutions to a variety of outstanding bilateral concerns in agricultural trade, including some that affect the dairy industry, my public comments with respect to this situation for obvious reasons must be rather guarded.

What I can say is that we have had useful discussions with our American counterparts. Those discussions are ongoing. Whether they result in a resolution in the short term or not we will have to wait and see.

However, the hon. member and other members of this House can be absolutely assured that the vital interests of Canada including the vital interests of the Canadian dairy industry are very much in my mind and very much on the front of the table.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

(1510)

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

MEMBERS' RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Allow me first of all to convey my respects and my congratulations to you on your election. For reasons that I will not mention, I was not in the House at the time when you were elected to this office. Needless to say, I am proud to extend to you, on behalf of the Conservative caucus in this House, our support and, above all, to wish you all the best for the coming Parliament.

I have chosen and asked to speak today on an issue which will impact on our rights and privileges during this Parliament. Part of yesterday's Throne Speech reads as follows:

The Government is committed to enhancing the credibility of Parliament. Changes will be proposed to the rules of the House of Commons to provide Members of Parliament a greater opportunity to contribute to the development of public policy and legislation.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my caucus and my Party, let me tell all the members of this House that we fully endorse such a statement and that we intend to support the government in this regard.

[*English*]

In respect to the statement made by the government in the speech from the throne, I want to take advantage of the fact that on the very first day that we sit we have very deep and very real preoccupations relating to our rights and privileges in this House.

I am rising on a point of order today not because I am asking for a ruling from the House, but I want to attract your attention, Mr. Speaker, and the attention of members to a few facts relating to our position on this side.

Even though the election campaign rendered a result that was quite clear in regard to the previous government, the results, if examined objectively for what they yielded for us on an electoral basis, were such that the Reform Party that sits with us in this

Point of Order

House obtained approximately 19 per cent of the vote and has a representation of 52 members.

The Official Opposition with 14 per cent of the vote has 54 members. The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada with 16 per cent of the vote has only two members. Our colleagues in the New Democratic Party, who I think have approximately 9 per cent of the vote, have nine members.

This, Mr. Speaker, as you know, creates a situation where—

The Speaker: The Chair would be disposed at this point to ask the hon. member to come to the point. I would very much like to hear it. I will then take other points of order. I would very much like to hear the end of this point of order if I could.

Mr. Charest: If I may be allowed to finish what I have to say.

The point that I want to make today is that as the leader of my own party I intend to bring this matter forward to you first, Mr. Speaker, on an informal basis and with the other political parties in this House so that we can discuss what opportunities there will be for us in this House of Commons in respect to the statement made in the speech from the throne, in respect to the statements already made by our friends in the Reform Party or our friends in the Bloc Québécois in regard to the opportunities that we will have to speak on behalf of the two million Canadians who offered us their support in the last election campaign.

That is the point that I wanted to make on this day so that at the very first opportunity when this House sits and when question period is happening you know, Mr. Speaker, and all members of this House know that we intend to argue this point and at least have the opportunity to be heard. This is so that we can deal with such matters as my hon. colleague and friend from Saint John sitting at one end of the aisle and I am sitting at the other end.

Furthermore, if I may, I have a question of privilege.

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member has made his point and I look forward to discussions with all hon. members in this House. The point is well taken and I do thank you for your intervention.

Is this on the same point of order or have you terminated?

Mr. Charest: No, I have a point of privilege.

(1515)

The Speaker: I have made the ruling on the point of order. Is this a point of privilege sir?

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, it is but I understand that my colleague from the Reform Party also has a point of order on the same subject I have just broached. I would be more than willing to enable him to say what he has to say and follow that up with a different point of privilege.

Privilege

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, on the same point with regard to the conduct of Question Period, there were a total of 17 members who asked questions today; 14 from the opposition parties and 3 from the government party. In your deliberations I would ask that there be a fairer distribution of questions during Question Period. The governing party has a majority of seats in this House yet we were relegated to three questions during question period.

I would also ask that you consider the use of lists during Question Period. I understand that it is the first question period of the session, but you were referring to lists provided to you by the government and by the opposition parties. I would submit that in effect restricts, limits and fetters your ultimate authority to recognize members in this House. I would ask that in your deliberations you consider the question of the provision of lists in order to establish those who are entitled and able to ask questions during question period.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. I would point out that I made a statement prior to question period today explaining the decision why we were going to go a little bit over. Of course, I take these comments under advisement. Negotiations will be ongoing for the next little while.

On the same point of order. The hon. member for Kamloops.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I have to reply to my hon. friend who has just spoken. I think it is well recognized in the parliamentary system that question period provides the opportunity for those in opposition to ask questions of the government. My hon. friend has many opportunities in caucus meetings and in other areas to raise questions of importance on behalf of his constituents. This is really the only opportunity that we have as opposition members.

If my hon. friend looks at the record of today he will find that for the first time that I can recall the government had far more statements than it would normally receive.

Mr. Speaker, recognize when you make your deliberations that this is the only opportunity we have on a daily basis to ask questions of the members opposite.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker I rise on a point of order.

I would request that you not permit grandstanding on supposed points of order. When the member for Sherbrooke was actually speaking to the throne speech he was totally out of order.

We would suggest that the House management committee which deals with standing orders look at these matters and respond to the House in the appropriate fashion.

The Speaker: Again, I will take your comments under advisement and I thank you for giving me as much room as you have thus far.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the point I raised is an issue that is ultimately to be decided by the Speaker and not by any other House or management committee. That is my understanding of the rules and the practices in this place. I am happy to co-operate with all members in this House in assisting you in making that decision.

My point of privilege is the following. I am sorry to have to raise it on this the very first day of question period. However, I could not help but notice that as we started question period you gave the House a temporary ruling on how this place would work for question period and for the statements we make before question period. I do not want to quarrel with the content of your ruling, maybe not at this point, but I want to question the process that led to this ruling.

(1520)

Let me point out that your ruling directly affects my rights and privileges and those of 12 other people in this place. I understand that neither I nor any of the other 12 members referred to in the ruling were consulted. This is my understanding unless someone else has spoken with you.

It is my understanding that you informed us as you gave us the ruling that you had spoken with the whips of the other official parties who represented a point of view.

The point I want to raise with you and the reason I feel it is critically important that we raise it at this time is that if you are going to make rulings as you are called upon to do every day concerning the rights and privileges of members of Parliament and how this place works, then it seems only fair on the principle of natural justice that all members in this place have an opportunity to be heard before such rulings are made.

The Speaker: I will take your comments under advisement. It would be the intention of the Chair to consult as widely as possible before taking any decisions. I will take the hon. member's comments under advisement.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

During the last Parliament, I recall a somewhat similar experience and I heard arguments from the government party. The Speaker told us at the time to consult with party officials and subsequently to notify the independent members who were not necessarily taking part in the negotiations. We know something about this. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that a ruling was

Routine Proceedings

made at the time, that arguments were put forward by two parties which were official parties at the time and which no longer have this status, and that I for one was convinced by what they had to say.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

STANDING ORDERS

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table a reprinted copy of the standing orders of this House dated June 1993 which encompasses all the changes made to the standing orders since May 1991, as well as a revised index.

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table two reports of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada pursuant to section 195(3) of the Canada Elections Act, chapter (e)(ii), Revised Statutes of Canada, 1985.

[Translation]

The first report is entitled "The 1992 Federal Referendum—Challenge Met." The second report is entitled "Towards the Thirty-Fifth General Election".

Consequently, pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), these reports are deemed to have been referred to the Standing Committee on House Management.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It is the report of the official Canadian delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the North-South Dialogue for Global Prosperity which was held in Ottawa from October 18 to October 22, 1993.

* * *

(1525)

PETITIONS

DECORATIONS AND MEDALS

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to submit the following petition.

[English]

It is my duty and honour to present this petition.

[Translation]

The petitioners urge the Government to recognize officially the significant services rendered by ambulance attendants and to ask the Committee on decorations and medals to authorize the striking of a medal for distinguished conduct in ambulance services. It would be given out after twenty years of good conduct and meritorious service.

[English]

I must add that this medal is given out in other services such as police, correction services, coast guard and fire. I would ask that the government consider this petition.

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions.

The first is a petition signed by my constituents in Burnaby—Kingsway and residents from elsewhere in British Columbia. It notes that in October 1985 a parliamentary subcommittee on equality rights unanimously recommended that the Canadian Human Rights Act be amended to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in all areas of federal jurisdiction. It also notes that the government has yet to introduce a legislative amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act despite the passage of time.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to ensure that the government and Parliament act immediately to bring forward an amendment to add sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Act as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by residents of Langley, British Columbia, as well as elsewhere in British Columbia and Ontario. It notes that the only relief available to two Canadians, Christine Lamont and David Spencer who have been sentenced to 28 years each in a Brazilian prison and have suffered miscarriages of justice in their judicial process, is for Canada to request expulsion in accordance with Brazilian law.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to urge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to request the Government of Brazil to expel Christine Lamont and David Spencer and return them to Canada.

Certainly I support that and I urge the government to act upon that request.

*The Address***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from January 18 consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his Speech at the opening of the session.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, here we are at the beginning not only of a new year but also of a new Parliament, with a new government, a new official opposition elected by the people of Quebec and a new formation representing mainly Western Canada.

The government party and the third party were given clear mandates by their respective voters. I wish to congratulate both leaders for their success at the polls. To the Prime Minister in particular, I wish health, clear-mindedness and broadness of outlook in carrying out his duties in this crucial time in the history of Canada and Quebec.

The people of Quebec will soon decide their future following a debate that we all hope will be marked by a spirit of democracy. This is also a time when the adverse effects of the combined economic and political crisis are threatening to make a growing number of our fellow citizens lose hope.

I also want to pay my respects generally to all the other members elected to this House. On behalf of my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, I can assure the Speaker, the government and all members of this House of our full co-operation in respecting decorum in this House. We will see to it, as far as we are concerned, that exchanges remain courteous though intense, rational though impassioned, orderly though vigorous.

The major change in this House is undoubtedly the massive influx of sovereigntist members from Quebec. No one can trivialize the shift represented by the decision some 2 million voters have made to send 54 members here to pave the way for Quebec's sovereignty.

(1530)

The dynamics which led Quebec to this decision were such that enough members were elected to form the Official Opposition. Paradoxical as it may seem, this electoral result flows from an implacable logic.

Indeed, it was inevitable that these old walls, which too often resounded with the voices of Quebecers who were ready to approve measures rejected by the voters, such as the Charlottetown Accord and the unilateral patriation of 1982, would one day hear the speeches of members who base their party allegiance on the commitment never to accept to compromise Quebec's interests in Ottawa; members who are freed from the

constraints of the old Canada-wide parties and who therefore will not be torn between their obligations as federalist parliamentarians and their loyalty to Quebec; members whose political career is motivated only by the determination to work, with their blinkers off, for Quebec's sovereignty.

Many in English Canada were surprised by the Bloc Québécois's achievement on October 25. To tell the truth, I am not surprised by that: the channels of communication from Quebec to English Canada are significantly distorted as they cross the border, so that the Quebec reality is perceived in a very confused way on the other side. That is the first justification for the presence of Quebec sovereigntists in this House.

Institutions often lag behind reality. The previous House of Commons was no exception to this rule; the stinging rejection of the Charlottetown Accord by voters in Canada and Quebec is striking proof. Today, the main architects of that accord have all disappeared from the political scene. They were the same people who showed cold indifference to the misfortune brought on by the long and difficult recession which began in the spring of 1990.

The voters have set the record straight. For the first time in contemporary history, this House which is now beginning its work reflects the very essence of Canada, its binational nature and the very different visions of the future which flow from that. Truth is never a bad advisor. As General de Gaulle said, one may well long for the days of sailing ships, but the only valid policy one can have is based on realities.

What are the realities with which this House will be faced? First of all, a really bad economic situation. To realize the full extent of it, it is not enough to look at the total picture as it is now; we must put it in the relevant chronological context.

The latest recession lasted roughly from April 1990 to April 1992, when net job losses stopped. But big business continues to lay off employees and the so-called recovery is so anemic that only economists dare to call it a recovery. Now, in early 1994, per capita GDP for all of Canada is still nearly 5 per cent less than it was in 1989. We know that per capita GDP is a more relevant indicator than total GDP, since it is affected by population growth, which is very large in Canada. Not only has Canada declined in relation to its partners but it is doing worse than before.

The employment situation does not seem any brighter, any more encouraging. By the end of 1993, the Canadian economy had regained only 60 per cent of all the jobs lost during the recession. The situation in Quebec is even more disastrous, since the recovery rate there is only 25 per cent. It must be said that for all practical purposes, Quebec had no government for much of 1993, but in that time, many young people arrived on the labour market. Just to absorb the number of net new job seekers, the Canadian economy would have to create over 200,000 jobs a year, about 45,000 of them in Quebec. The 1993

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performance of 147,000 jobs in Canada, most of which are part-time, and none in Quebec, is far off the mark.

These chilling statistics hide thousands of human dramas. No one goes gladly to an employment centre for the unemployment insurance benefits to which they are entitled. Underemployment has considerable economic and social costs. It is a real collective tragedy. In this regard, it is very urgent to put people back to work, giving them real hope of recovering their dignity by regaining the right to earn their living.

(1535)

Therefore, it is no surprise that the unemployment level remains at such a high level. Fortunately, the American economy is not suffering from the same problems as those of the Canadian economy. Consequently, the economic situation has at least one aspect that works for us, namely exports to the United States. But the result is that the gap between American and Canadian unemployment rates has never been so high, the difference being close to five percentage points. The recovery south of the border is much stronger than here.

Indeed, major obstacles to a strong recovery continue to exist in Canada. In the last few years, inflation has been lower here than in the United States, but our interest rates remain high.

We hear a lot about the fact that interest rates are presently at their lowest level in thirty years. The reality is that this is only true of short-term interest rates. In 1963, the bank rate set by the Bank of Canada and the preferred rate charged by banks were about the same as today. However, the rate of a 25 year mortgage was 7 per cent, and the rate of long-term Canadian bonds was 5.1 per cent, instead of the present 7.25 and 7 per cent rates that now apply to a five-year mortgage. This is where the problem lies, and it is a two-fold problem. Indeed, long-term interest rates remain too high, while the purchasing power of Canadian households has dropped significantly.

Soon we will have no choice but to take a close look at the characteristics, the evolution and the magnitude of our economic problems, and also at the hardships that they create for their primary victims, namely the one and a half million unemployed workers, and the millions of children and adults who live below the poverty level. It appears that the new government prefers not to assess the magnitude of the problem, which is not even touched upon in the Throne Speech. Moreover, the government does not realize that we are caught in a vicious circle. The fact is that there will not be a true recovery as long as the political structure remains the same. Indeed, the present political structure is the primary cause of the falling into decay of the Canadian economy.

One of the most obvious, if not spectacular, signs of this is the chronic inability of federal governments to control the budget deficit and the resulting soaring debt. It seems that this voracious monster can at will, like the Minotaur, take its toll in terms of jobs, of the minimal security of the poor, of the financial health of the federal State, and even of the future of our young people. Not only have those deficits been constant for the past 18 years, but this year's, which stands at some \$43 billion, confirms that the system is totally out of order.

In order to get out of this mess, it will not be enough to blame the previous government. In any case, Canadians have already let us know what they thought of its performance. Yet, the careful observer who has not buried his head in the sand cannot fail to identify a certain element of ineffectiveness, which is inherent to the system.

Nevertheless, the government continues to pursue the ostrich's policy followed by its predecessor. By escaping from reality, it cannot put the finger on the main problem: this country is not governable, because it is stuck with a deficient and sclerotic decision-making structure.

Nothing seems to make successive governments in Ottawa come out of the cocoon in which they shelter themselves from reality, and so it is with this new government.

Yet, one only has to look at the relative performance of various other countries subject to the same international environment. This is a sure criterion, since everybody is facing the same economic problems and requirements. Therefore, the global context does not justify Canada's mediocre performance in terms of productivity since 1979, the worst of all OECD countries, nor the persistence of such a high unemployment level, nor the uncontrolled growth of the debt which, as we know, reached \$500 billion yesterday. Canada is also in first place in terms of relying on foreign investors, since 40 per cent of its debt is owed to foreign interests.

Be that as it may, it is not free trade agreements, global markets, or the requirements imposed by the competitiveness of the world markets which, in the last few decades, have forced the federal government to embark upon all kinds of programs and expenditures, to encroach upon provincial jurisdictions, and to create a tentacular bureaucracy. Rather, this extravagance and this inconsistency were motivated by a triple internal concern: to give to the federal government a legitimacy snatched from the provinces; to affirm its role as a strong central government; and to neutralize the centrifugal forces of the structure. It is our political structures which are called into question when we wonder why we have become the most overgoverned country in the Western world, with 11 governments for a population of 28 million people.

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(1540)

We only have ourselves to blame if overlapping federal and provincial activities prevent the creation of cohesive programs and generate an outrageous amount of waste in human and financial resources. That reveals a second reality as inescapable as the economic crisis, that certain inefficiencies are at the very heart of our system. These realities feed upon each other, and are a true reflection of the vicious circle which characterizes Canadian federalism. At the core of the economic crisis is a political crisis.

But for the better part of English Canada, there is no political crisis. Or, if there is one, they choose to ignore it. They have sent to Ottawa a new government with the mandate to better manage the present system without changing anything in it.

On the other hand, Quebecers not only sent a completely new team to Ottawa, but they gave their elected representatives the mandate to prepare a new order. The Bloc Québécois was given a double mission: to manage the economic crisis and to handle the political crisis. Does the distribution of elected members in this House not prove the very existence of this second crisis? The government party only got 19 seats in Quebec, compared to 54 for the Bloc. Who do you think speaks for Quebec today?

[English]

More than 30 years ago Quebec awakened to the world and decided to catch up. The quiet revolution transformed Quebec. It did not take long before the spirit of reform in Quebec collided with the spirit of Canadian federalism in Ottawa. Thirty years ago the horns were locked. Thirty years later we are still at it, as if frozen in a time warp. We should learn from the past, and this we should have learned: The political problem with Canada is Quebec, and the problem of Quebec is Canada.

However, many Canadians refuse to acknowledge the problem which only serves to compound it. For example, the Bloc Québécois has been on the federal scene for more than three years, but until recently we were ranked alongside the bizarre and the outer fringes.

Our aim of course is not to win popularity contests in English Canada, but we have here in a nutshell the essence of the political predicament which bedevils Canada. A new political party which had led systematically in the polls in Quebec for three years was regularly dismissed as a quirk on the charts or a manifestation of a temporary lapse of the senses. Hugh MacLennan's powerful novel *Two Solitudes* was published in 1945. Half a century later the title still mirrors the political landscape.

Some are willing to deny the obvious in order not to upset the status quo. They speak of one Canadian nation, whereas Quebec and English Canada are two different nations. Even when nobody in Quebec was contemplating sovereignty, the Canada that steered Quebecers was not of the same cloth as the Canada

that seized the minds and hearts of maritimers, Ontarians or westerners. Quebecers were in the vanguard of the struggle for more Canadian autonomy under the Red Ensign and eventually for the political independence of Canada. This tends to be forgotten in certain quarters where Quebec bashing is a popular pastime.

Canada and Quebec have both changed tremendously in the last 100 years, but they are travelling on parallel tracks and remain as different today as they were yesterday. By and large they both continue to ignore the history and the culture of the other. This is no accident; language, geography and history largely account for it.

However, Quebecers do not deny that English Canada constitutes a nation in its own right with its own sense of community. Every single poll in the last few years has shown that the vast majority of the people in each of the nine provinces want to remain politically united after Quebec becomes sovereign. This small detail is conveniently neglected by all those who question the existence of an English Canada on the shaky basis of regional differences.

In France the people of the north are certainly as different, if not more so, from the people of the south as maritimers are from the people of British Columbia. But they both feel a strong attachment to France, or to Canada.

(1545)

In fact, by clinging to the one nation thesis, English Canada is running the risk of undermining itself. As Kenneth McRoberts, the political scientist from York University, wrote in 1991: "In its effort to deny Quebec's distinctiveness, English Canada has been led to deny its own".

If one accepts the obvious, one must surely accept the consequences. Every nation has the right to self-government, that is to decide its own policies and future. We have no quarrel with the concept of federalism when applied to unilingual states. It is a different matter when it comes to multinational states, particularly to the Canadian brand of federalism.

Canadian federalism means that the Government of Quebec is subordinate to the central government both in large and lesser matters. Within the federal regime, English Canada in fact has a veto on the future development of Quebec.

When the theme of national sovereignty is brought up in English Canada a nice paradox almost always emerges. As I will certainly refer to it in the coming months, I shall call it the paradox of English Canada. First, the tendency to consider *passé* the concept of national sovereignty, what with the European Community, GATT, NAFTA and so on. This is a patent misreading of the situation. Take a look at the western world. Ninety-five per cent of its population live in nation states.

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The fact is that Quebec is the only nation of more than seven million people in the western world not to have attained political sovereignty. I invite members of this House to reflect upon this. As a political structure Canada is the exception rather than the rule, an exception that is not working well, to understate the case.

The particular situation of Quebec was inadvertently recognized by a member of the Canadian delegation to the final GATT negotiations in mid-December. As will be recalled, Canada was seeking to be exempted from the clause attacking subsidies by sub-national governments because, in his words: "There is only one Quebec". He was right of course.

Let us ask ourselves: Who was in the driver's seat during the European revolution of 1989-90 which saw German reunification and the accession to political sovereignty of so many nations in central and eastern Europe? Was it the supranational institutions, the EC, NATO, the Warsaw pact, or was it the different nations, each one of them seizing the chance of a lifetime?

In short, Quebecers aspire to what is considered normal in the western world.

The paradox of English Canada pops up with the second part of the discussion about national sovereignty, the part that deals with the issue of Canadian sovereignty. A large part of the free trade election of November 1988 was spent, in English Canada, on the impact of the free trade agreement on the sovereignty of Canada. Everybody agreed that this was something important that should not be tampered with. However if Canada's political sovereignty vis-à-vis the U.S.A. is valuable and must be preserved, why is it that Quebec's political sovereignty vis-à-vis Canada is depicted as irrational in the anglophone media of the land? When the preceding Prime Minister said that she preserved Canadian sovereignty during the last stage of the NAFTA negotiations, why is it that nobody rolled their eyes and derided this quaint idea of sovereignty? What mysterious alchemy transforms the quality of a concept according to the people to whom it applies or according to the year of accession to sovereignty? One must not forget that independent nations are not born. They are made.

All this does not prevent Canadians and Quebecers from having quite a few things in common: a respect for democracy, a large degree of openness to people of other cultures, and a fascination with our neighbours south of the border. And they both love their country. However, the problem is and has been for a very long time, that it is not the same country.

[Translation]

Make no mistake about it. We will not stop reminding the people that, in order to legitimize his power play against Quebec National Assembly in 1982, Pierre Trudeau was able to call

upon the support of Quebec's Liberal members of Parliament in order to claim to speak on behalf of Quebec.

(1550)

We will repeat as often as necessary that the government party no longer speaks for Quebec. You can also be sure that we will not lose sight—and will not allow anyone to lose sight—of the fact that the new Prime Minister is the very man who led the assault against Quebec, in 1981, and ignored the quasi-unanimous repudiation by the Quebec National Assembly.

The Charlottetown episode followed a similar pattern. Did we not see a block of Conservative members from Quebec, who had initially got into politics to repair the damage done by the 1982 patriation, side with the Liberals in an effort to seal the fate, once and for all, of Quebec's historical claims?

The 1992 referendum results dispelled any lingering ambiguity. The rejection of the Accord from coast to coast ended all hopes that some may still have had for a renewed federal system in Canada. You take it or leave it as it is.

The Prime Minister himself came to the same conclusion. Did he not announce shortly after coming into office that he would not even attempt such a reform?

Thus we should be able to make in the clear light of day the decision we are supposed to make by referendum in Quebec. We are left with only two choices: either we settle for the status quo that almost every federalist in Quebec since Jean Lesage has denounced or, the alternative is clear, Quebec attains full sovereignty, with full powers to assume full responsibility. The identity and roles of the players would be clarified at the same time.

There certainly seems to be a sort of poetic justice in all this. The henchman of the dastardly deed in 1982, who has since become Prime Minister, will soon have to ask the people of Quebec to turn down the sovereignty deal in favour of the constitutional one which had earned him their reprobation in the first place. And he will have to do it on his own, without the support that his mentor, Pierre Trudeau, claimed to have in Quebec. You can see why he does not want the talk Constitution, as he said.

By its presence and actions in this House, the Bloc Quebecois will be doing every Quebecer and Canadian a service, whether they like it or not, by preventing them from going back to square one. Now that the Meech and Charlottetown accords have stripped the varnish of political correctness from the Canadian federal system, revealing its obstinate fixedness, everyone is immune to promises of renewal. So much so that nobody dares make any, not even to score political points.

This imposes upon us a basic civic duty, which consists in sparing ourselves three more decades of fruitless discussion, endless attempts and lost illusions. This waste of resources, this dilution of collective hope, this misuse of our energy has been going on for too long already. All we have to show today for the

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ordeal the best wills in Quebec and English Canada have suffered is bitterness, suspicion, lack of understanding and a profound collective alienation. We are about to lose the very will to face reality squarely.

More importantly, there is the waste of time. I am not only referring to that of the people who, in the excitement of the sixties, dreamed of solving our conflicts and building in Quebec and Canada societies that would be tolerant, imaginative, open to the world and concerned with social justice. I am thinking of our two nations in particular. Because time is running out for them too. While we mope around, the world is coming apart and rebuilding around us. The boat is going by and we are missing it.

Whether we like it or not, there will be a debate on our political future, and it will take place right here. The government is free to stonewall as has been the practice in this House with regard to the sovereigntist aspirations of so many Quebecers. Is it out of fear or powerlessness that they are evading subjects that put into question the old political structures of Quebec and Canada as well as their capacity to solve social and economic problems? Whether fainthearted or resigned, this total silence is irresponsible and leads to paralysis. The Bloc Québécois has been sent here precisely to break this conspiracy of silence.

(1555)

We will not be afraid to point out that Quebecers are and will always be in a clear minority position within the federal system. The population ratio is three to one. We can fool ourselves and believe that we can determine the course of events despite this ever-present handicap which relegates Quebec to second-place status when interests diverge. This would imply constant tension and a superior performance on our part. In other words, utopia.

If the truth be told, the Trudeauesque utopia is not foreign to the annals of French Canadian history. For many decades, French Canadians believed that their destiny was prophetic. In many respects, Pierre Trudeau is the last missionary of French Canada.

Here again, we are confronted with a paradox. Canada needed measures to safeguard against the demographic and economic weight of the United States. Hence the creation of the Foreign Investment Review Agency and the implementation of the new energy policy. Quebec, on the other hand, did not require measures to protect itself from the demographic and economic weight of English Canada. Competence was all that was required and everything else would take care of itself. How very naive! And this was seen as reason triumphing over passion.

In reality, Quebecers want to live a normal life. They are tired of fighting for basic things that have been denied them. They are quite willing to confront the challenges of the day, but they want all of the odds to be on their side. On the one hand, they want greater economic integration and a stronger competitive position internationally, while on the other hand, they want political sovereignty in order to face Quebec's competitive partners on a level playing field.

Quebec sovereigntists advocate a modern concept of political sovereignty, one which is exercised within the framework of major economic structures and which is respectful of minorities. Under no circumstances will the 630,000 francophones outside Quebec be sacrificed. Moreover, Quebec sovereigntists were not the ones who rejected the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and NAFTA. There is a difference between withdrawing into oneself and pulling out in order to perform better in the new global economy.

The close economic integration between Quebec and Canada forces us to take a careful look at what is happening in Europe. What lessons can we draw from the European model?

[English]

Some pundits like to believe the European Community will gradually transform itself into something resembling Canadian federalism and use this as an argument against Quebec sovereignty. Thus they reveal their lack of familiarity with European developments. In fact the other way around appears much more likely. To solve the Canadian political crisis our present institutions should and I dare say will evolve along the lines of the European Community.

A few facts seem in order. The European Commission in Brussels has a budget that amounts to 1.2 per cent of the global GNP of the community. It has no fiscal powers and—such a tragedy—cannot run a deficit. The federal government in Ottawa spends 22 per cent of GNP and has the whole gamut of fiscal powers. As for deficits we all know what has happened. The commission in Brussels has no army, no police and a small bureaucracy when compared to national governments. Community decisions are in fact executed by national bureaucracies. If we exclude trade matters, national sovereignty remains the basic ingredient of the community.

For instance the 12 members could modify the structure and the workings of the EC without the commission having any say in the decision. For these countries co-operation is the master word, not subordination.

This is a far cry from the Canadian brand of federalism. Who will pretend, for example, that only the provincial governments determine the future of Canada? Who will pretend that the federal government is but a benevolent arbitrator of inter-regional conflicts? For Quebec the central government is the problem. For English Canada it is part of the solution.

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The Maastricht treaty extended the process of economic integration to the field of monetary policy by setting the objective of a common currency before the end of the century, and the process of political co-operation by specifying the objective of a common thread in the fields of defence and foreign policy. These sensitive fields will remain the prerogative of the heads of state assembled in the European Council.

(1600)

Hence the following question: If the European union is indeed the wave of the future as is frequently alleged in the Canadian media, why not propose this model as a solution to Canada's national problem? If Maastricht represents the embodiment of the next century, why does English Canada not propose the same kind of arrangement to Quebec? The Maastricht arrangements would be much easier to implement between Quebec and Canada than among 12 very diverse countries.

[Translation]

Let there be no mistake. Bloc members will not forget that their commitment to sovereignty constitutes the real reason for their presence in this House. One could say that as far as we are concerned, the pre-referendum campaign has begun. Meanwhile, we will not let the recession be dissociated from its causes.

For the time being, and until Quebecers have made their decision in a referendum, members of the Bloc will seek to safeguard the future by averting present evils to the best of their ability. These evils include unemployment, poverty, lack of budgetary restraint, undue duplication, threats to our social programs, fiscal inequity and loss of confidence in our political institutions and leaders.

All these issues have a direct impact on Quebec's interests but are equally important for the rest of Canada. Our aspirations drive us apart, but our social, economic and budgetary problems are the same.

[English]

As Premier Bob Rae would say: "We are all in the same boat".

[Translation]

Who can challenge the legitimacy, even for the whole of Canada, of any action the Bloc may take to limit the damage, create jobs, wrestle with the deficit and fight off attacks against our social programs? The universal character of these concerns confers a clear legitimacy on a common response to these issues. In addition, we received an electoral mandate. Our 54 seats were allocated by the principal players: the electorate. Do these seats have any less clout because they come from Quebec?

I can already hear our opponents claiming that it was only thanks to an erratic division of seats of English Canada between the Liberals and Reform members that the Bloc was able to come to the fore with the second largest number of members. However, the impact of spoilers and how this translates to the electoral map is also an expression of the will of the electorate. It was a combination of all votes, whether they were from Quebec or the rest of Canada, which made us the Official Opposition. To criticise the fact that this responsibility has now been taken over by the Bloc Quebecois shows a lack of respect for the democratic process as a whole.

We intend to take these responsibilities seriously; and we will do so loyally, correctly and with due resolve. We know that is what Quebecers expect us to do, and they would never forgive us if we deviated from this path.

In this respect, we are guided by two principles: equity and responsibility. On both counts, the speech from the throne was a complete disappointment. At a time when more than one child out of six and one family out of eight are living below the poverty line in this country, when a million and a half people are unemployed, and when more and more people in Quebec see this as proof of the failure of Canadian federalism, one would expect the new government to stage a strong and spectacular rally.

There is a general and widespread feeling of disappointment, both among the needy, breadwinners, young people and seniors, and also among business people and investors.

All were anxious to know what specific measures would be taken to put Canadians back to work. Unfortunately, the government merely served up a condensed version of its little red book. The first hundred days of this government will not go down in history.

Analyse though we may, we will find none of the answers we expected in the speech from the throne.

Is there anything in the way of projects that hold out some hope? Nothing. The talk goes on about municipal infrastructures. It may be useful, but the program falls tragically short of what it would take to jump start the economy. The government has failed to understand how important it is to give people hope. How can the unemployed take heart, how can decision makers consider investing when the government is not even aware of the seriousness of the situation? When it should have taken drastic measures such as starting work on the high-speed rail link between Windsor and Quebec City, transferring labour training programs and resources to Quebec, where all parties have been lobbying for it for a long time, when it should have set up a fund to convert military industry to civilian uses, when it should have taken so many measures, the government chose to be content with publishing yet another pamphlet filled with vague electioneering propaganda.

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(1605)

The government will no doubt retort that it does not have the resources to invest in economic recovery. That is tantamount to acknowledging a lack of political courage and administrative stringency. Indeed, it is possible to reduce the deficit while leaving room to manoeuvre. To do that, you have to decide once and for all to cut spending. But the will to do so is lacking. We agree as to the diagnosis, but not as to the treatment.

The Bloc Québécois is willing to support an ambitious deficit cutting plan, but not just any one. We cannot ignore the origin of the present national debt. We cannot forget that the federal government was the first one to open wide the gates in the early 1980's, leading to this spiralling public debt. As we all know, on March 31, 1994, the net debt will reach \$507 billion whereas the combined debt of all the provinces will be less than \$170 billion. This explains why, a few years ago, the federal government decided to unload part of the federal deficit on the provinces.

In view of this heavy responsibility, the federal government should show the way rather than impose its will by decree. Before considering shrinking the social safety net, before passing the buck to the provinces, the federal government must first put its own house in order. It could follow two very different paths. Ridding the federal administration of its fat could be done very quickly by eliminating useless trips, contracts awarded to private interests, friends and friends of friends, extravagant spending here and abroad, and by taking into account the horror stories which have been listed, year after year, by the Auditor General in his annual report.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bouchard: Good resolutions, noble intentions to let parliamentarians speak do not last long, do they? They cannot even wait for the end of the first real sitting day, for the end of the speech by the Leader of the Opposition to start hurling insults.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Order. I would hope hon. members would hear each other out in the debates as much as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bouchard: That would require a thorough and detailed study of each and every department's internal expenses. We all know how much the bureaucracy is unwilling to curb its appetite. Restraint will have to be imposed from the outside; in other words, it will have to come from the Canadian Parliament. The government has expressed its willingness to increase the responsibilities of this House. We take them at their word. We ask that they abide by that promise in a very concrete and significant manner. A meticulous analysis of these expenditures by a parliamentary commission representing all of us in

this House would be proof of the government's good faith and would allow us to seriously inform the public as to the extent of the excessive expenses within government itself.

The whole issue of national defence will have to be rethought in the light of the new geopolitical world map. The Bloc Québécois will closely follow the federal task force in charge of this operation. Meanwhile, however, all capital expenditures should be frozen.

This is only part of the way of life of our government. There is another aspect which was omitted in the Speech from the Throne. The federal government refuses to recognize the real scope of it, that is the duplication of federal and provincial activities. What exactly is the cost of that constant grappling between the federal and the provinces?

A curious turnaround occurred in the way even the most fervent federalists themselves analyze the operation of the present system. Until recently, they praised the government for having achieved the optimum sharing of powers between the two levels. But we cannot keep on deluding ourselves; it is quite common now for people to denounce the bureaucratic duplication and the waste it causes.

(1610)

In 1991 the Canadian Treasury Board conducted a study of overlapping federal and provincial programs. The study involved 453 different federal programs in 119 Departments, Crown corporations or other federal organizations, with a total budget of \$96 billion. Forty-five per cent of these programs, which account for \$40 billion in expenditures, overlapped directly with provincial programs.

In other words, overlapping is the rule rather than the exception. The Bélanger-Campeau Commission concluded that if we could do away with this situation, we could save billions of dollars. According to the Quebec government itself, in the area of manpower and employment training alone, the overlapping is costing Quebec taxpayers \$250 million a year. The federal and provincial structures in the field of manpower adjustment and training services include more than 50 programs and sub-programs for the same people who are thus left to wander in a maze of services.

Right now, in Quebec, we are in the incredible situation whereby 75,000 to 90,000 jobs cannot be filled due to a lack of skilled labour, when over 25,000 Quebecers are waiting to be trained.

This is at the heart of the dysfunctional federalism and the legitimacy crisis which is paralysing Canada. This administrative mess comes from the very nature of the system. However, this is also a sign of the willingness of the government to tolerate waste. Here is a real bonanza, an opportunity to save money and increase efficiency at all levels of government. But the federal government refuses because of its centralising

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ideology, its veneration of the status quo or simply because of petty politics.

Another area where the government is not taking its responsibilities has to do with public probity. It is praiseworthy to talk about promoting parliamentary democracy and deferring to the moral authority of the Speaker, but when searching for ways to enhance the credibility of parliamentarians, it is too easy to make only cosmetic reforms. The Speech from the Throne fails to recognize that the first step to take to ensure an ethical public service is to institute party financing by the people. When will federal parties forego the unlimited contributions they get from large corporations? When will they finally get out from under their hold? The Bloc, for one, made the necessary sacrifices to enter this House with its hands free. Of its free will, it adopted the restrictions provided by the Quebec legislation, drawing its inspiration from one of the great democratic principles passed down to us by René Lévesque. To talk about a political code of ethics and to think openness can be achieved without reforming party financing is just smoke and mirrors.

The opportunities flowing from the generalities of the Speech from the Throne are no better in the area of equity. First, the omissions of the abbreviated red book that serves as a Speech from the Throne say a lot about the Liberal complacency where fiscal inequities are concerned.

Canadians are not all equal before the tax system. Some benefit from tax shelters that have no economic justification. Some sell smuggled cigarettes or liquor and others buy them. Several avoid paying any tax, thanks to the underground economy whose rapid expansion is a measure of the poor performance of the GST. This tax, which was supposed to bring in \$16.5 billion of federal revenue in 1991, yielded only \$15 billion in 1993. The government's legitimacy is still losing ground while the idea that it is OK to evade taxation is gaining ground.

Some adjustments must be made. First, illegitimate tax shelters must disappear. Second, smuggling must be eradicated. In fact, there is only one peaceful way to do this and that is to pull the carpet out from under the smugglers' feet, that is, to reduce sharply the price gap between the product sold legally and the smuggled one. It has become urgent from a social point of view to reduce taxes on tobacco because of all the repercussions due to their prohibitive level. If we do not take immediate and decisive action, the social contract will continue to be broken a little bit more every day.

Inequity breeds inequity. Not only will wealthy families be allowed to shelter huge sums of money into trusts but, in a blatant example of double standards, the government will recoup by reducing the social safety net provided to the underprivileged. Lacking the courage to cut into its wasteful spending, into federal-provincial duplication and into unjustified tax shelters, the government will prefer to make the unemployed, the people on welfare and pensioners pay. The direct victims of the crisis are about to be described as troublemakers at the very time where they most need the help they are used to expect,

given the compassion and social solidarity held as true Quebec and Canadian values.

(1615)

We have heard various hypotheses about what the government intends to do with the social programs and provincial transfers. In the Throne Speech, we heard about "reform", "renewal", "streamlining", "restructuring", "modernization", "redefinition" and "review". In fact, we heard all the deceitful synonyms used by governments trying to avoid the appropriate terminology, like cuts, reduction, and decrease. Any extended recession tends to increase the income gap between the people at the top of the pyramid and those at the bottom. The previous government was particularly insensitive to the seriousness of the last recession and the hardships it brought about. There is a new kind of poverty in Canada. It is unacceptable that the new budget cuts be aimed at people already severely affected by economic hardships. To work together to get out of the recession is one thing. But to do so at the expense of the people who are already suffering too much is something the Bloc Québécois is determined to expose and fight. For us in the Bloc, social protection is something that remains inviolable.

The same goes for federal transfers to the provinces, which have been targeted in the last few years. As you know, these transfers are used to finance part of the provincial social programs. Parliament has yet to be consulted and already the government is talking about simply freezing the transfers for the next five years. Such a decision would put the blame on the provinces for the federal budget crisis, which would be a blatant non-truth. Economically, transfer freezing would result in a decrease, in constant dollars, of 3.5 percent per capita per year, for a total reduction of 18 percent over five years. But in fact, more than 60 percent of these payments are made to the poorer provinces. Quebec would become a net contributor to the federation, which would be a total aberration. And the federal government would wash its hands and seem to have a good conscience, while the provinces are left to care for the underprivileged who have been dealt another blow.

With respect to federal inequities towards Quebec, it is hardly enough to say that the Speech from the Throne was silent on that subject. It would be more appropriate to say that the government wants to bury these telling signs of the true fate of Quebec under the federal system in Canada. Not a line on that, not a word, not even a subtle reference, nothing. The government continues to ignore the official statistics, compiled here in Ottawa, which clearly show that in many areas Quebec receives a lot less than its fair share, namely in the areas of federal procurement, federal investments, agriculture, research and development, regional development, defence and so on. The media in English Canada have blamed the Bloc for putting the emphasis on those areas where Quebec is at a disadvantage and ignoring those where our province enjoys an advantage. They accuse us of painting a darker picture of the situation without reason. The presence of sovereigntists in this House is absolutely necessary

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to remind people of certain true facts that have been kept in the dark.

It is very simple and one does not need a long list of statistics to understand what it is all about. In fact, one just has to look at the most recent data available, which show that Quebec receives from the federal government about the same amount it sends to Ottawa in taxes, converting of course the present deficits of the federal government in future taxes. Thanks to their deficits, the federal authorities can spend in each province more than they levy in taxes. But just wait to see the bill that the next generation will have to pay!

Some are in a hurry to point out that, as a poorer member of the federation, Quebec will receive equalization payments totalling \$3.7 billion in 1993-94. But the original purpose of equalization was to bridge the gap between poorer and richer provinces, was it not? In other words, equalization should represent a real supplement for those provinces which receive it. It so happens that Quebec does not get a supplement. The equalization payments that Quebec receives are only to compensate for what the province does not get from the federal government in other areas. So Quebec has to finance its own equalization payments. In reality, equalization in Canada is a transfer from rich English-speaking provinces to poor English-speaking provinces.

(1620)

For Quebec, equalization is only meagre compensation for the considerable loss of potential revenue in the form of federal spending on job creation. For instance, the equalization system does not compensate for the substantial advantage enjoyed by Ontario's economy as a result of concentrated federal spending on research and development.

This unfair division of government spending is not just some perverse result of the federal system but is part and parcel of that system.

So how does all this fit in with what we intend to do during the months to come?

First of all, there is a way to reduce the federal deficit by several billion dollars, starting with the next fiscal year, without affecting the social safety net and transfer payments to the provinces which are basically earmarked for social programs. This would have a significant impact on financial markets and thus on interest rates. A drop of one percentage point would put \$8 billion annually back into the pockets of consumers and businesses and at the same time ease the servicing of federal and

provincial debts. The impact would be vastly superior to that of the government's infrastructure program.

In the present context, however, it is not enough to simply reduce the deficit. Steps must also be taken to strengthen productivity, the backbone of the Canadian and Quebec economies. If interest rates continue to go down, there will be a recovery in the consumption of durable goods, including housing and cars. However, the production side will also need a boost. This would include helping more vulnerable sectors find a new niche. That is the way of the jobs of the future. Increasing research and development, an area where Canada is clearly lagging behind other Western countries, and easing the conversion of much of our military industry would be a priority as far as we are concerned. Once the economy has been nudged on its way to recovery, it will generate tax revenues that will help bring the federal deficit back to acceptable proportions. Cuts may be necessary, but cuts alone are not enough.

In concluding, I would like to repeat that unlike the government, members of the Bloc Québécois will not evade any of the issues this Parliament will have to face. We will not tolerate the government's refusal to deal with Quebec's aspirations. Let it not be said that it was for nothing that the majority of federalists and all Quebec sovereignists struggled, each in their own way, for thirty years to give Quebec the tools to develop as a people. What Quebec started in the Sixties must be allowed to come to fruition.

After the concept of a nation was established, after mobilizing Quebec society, after the efforts of Jean Lesage, the manoeuvring of Robert Bourassa and the courage of René Lévesque, there must be more than the evasive platitudes of the Prime Minister. He should realize that the history of Quebec did not stop on a certain night in November in 1981, behind closed doors in the Château Laurier. I suggest he look at the 54 members of this party sitting here today and remember who sent us here and the mandate we were given.

Then he will realize that Quebec's future as a sovereign country is just one step ahead, a sovereign country that is Canada's neighbour and friend.

I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons and member for Roberval,

That the following words be added to the Address: "This House deplores the fact that Your Excellency's advisers have shown themselves to be unconcerned about matters of extreme importance, such as the placing of public finances on a sounder footing and the cutting of fat from the federal administration; lack of vision in dealing with the economy, as made evident by the inadequacy of their proposed measures for promoting employment and by their perpetuation of the existing confusion in human resource programs; are ignorant of Quebec's legitimate political aspirations; and have

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presented to Parliament a program embodying an obvious willingness to dismantle the social security system and maintain an unfair tax system, thereby further undermining the financial well-being of a growing number of citizens.”

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

(1625)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, before anything else, let me congratulate you on your election last Monday which was exceptional in a way. As you know, your role is a fundamental one in our democratic institutions. Let me assure you today that my government and the members of my party will support you at all times and will try to facilitate your work in every possible way.

I would also like to congratulate the two members who moved the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, the members for Bruce—Grey and Madawaska—Victoria. Although they are new at this, they showed us how wise their constituents were in choosing them as their representatives in this House.

I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that they will enjoy a long and outstanding career in this House.

[*English*]

There is no greater honour than standing before you in this House as Prime Minister of Canada. I will do my best to make a contribution to this great work in progress we know as Canada. In fact, each of us in this House has a role to play and a responsibility in that area.

I want to salute and welcome the men and women from all parties whom Canadians elected to the House of Commons on October 25.

This session of Parliament has an unprecedented number of new members. More than two-thirds of the women and men in this House are new to Parliament. It is the biggest injection of new energy in the history of this institution. I look forward to the new spirit that will come from this fresh Parliament. Canadians are looking for members of all parties in this House to work together in a very constructive way and I am confident that we can work together on many issues of importance to the people of our constituencies and of our country as a whole.

[*Translation*]

If there are a record number of new members in the House, there are also a few well-known figures such as the Government House leader who has been part of our political scene for 31 years, I am told, and other veterans such as the members for Ottawa—Vanier and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce who have been present in this House for so long they should serve as models for many of us. I would also call upon the many new party members to consult them occasionally as they could be of service. They

are familiar with this House and have made some very positive contributions throughout their successful career.

(1630)

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to the people of the constituency of Saint-Maurice, a region that knows me and understands me very well. I want my constituents to know that I will work hard for them and that I am deeply honoured to serve for the ninth time in my life as the honourable member for Saint-Maurice, a responsibility which gives me the greatest pleasure of all. I will always be very grateful for this opportunity.

The people of Saint-Maurice want the same things as their fellow Canadians across the country. They want their government and their elected representatives to begin the much-needed process of healing the country. They want them to set aside old grievances and debates and to focus on building a country that we will be proud to leave to our children.

What kind of country do the constituents of Saint-Maurice want? What kind of country do Canadians want? They want a country full of hope instead of fear, a country where each person is an equal partner and can make a contribution, rather than be a burden to society. They want a country where adults can find a decent, interesting job, a country where children can dream of a happy future. They want a country that recognizes our communities as the pillars of social stability and economic strength, a country with a dynamic economy, one which fosters the entrepreneurial spirit and which is on the cutting edge of technological progress and change.

They want a country where the government listens to them and respects them. Finally, they want a competent, honest and fair government, one that keeps its promises and helps them achieve their potential. That is what Canadians want and that is what this government will endeavour to give them.

[*English*]

Everything we do during this Parliament will be aimed at healing the deep wounds in our country, at restoring the bonds of trust and respect between Canadians and the government. It will be aimed at rebuilding our economic vitality to ensure that every Canadian is able to realize his or her full potential.

Canadians voted for that kind of government on October 25. Above all, Canadians voted for a government that follows through on its commitments, that keeps its word and lives up to its promises.

From the moment we took office a little more than two months ago we have been working to keep the pledges we made to the Canadian people. We have done what we said we would do.

For example, on November 4 we cancelled the \$5.8 billion helicopter program, a luxury we did not need and could not afford. The same day we introduced a 23-member cabinet, the

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smallest ever. We cut \$10 million from the offices of ministers and we reduced the size of the Prime Minister's Office.

(1635)

Last Sunday the whip introduced a program to give a good example of where this institution has decided to cut by \$5 million the expenses that we have to incur as a Parliament. In the week since then we moved immediately to implement the national infrastructure program. In fact this month we will sign infrastructure agreements with every province and projects to put people back to work will get started in a matter of days and weeks.

We sought and received improvements to enable Canada to sign NAFTA. We helped to negotiate a GATT agreement that opens new horizons for increased exports abroad and increased jobs at home.

We reviewed the Pearson airport deal and cancelled it because it did not serve the interests of taxpayers.

We appointed a new Governor of the Bank of Canada.

We levelled with Canadians about the size of the deficit that we generated and about the huge debt that we will have to carry and we set up a new consultative process for the next budget.

In our first meeting with provincial premiers we began work on such issues as eliminating interprovincial trade barriers, ending duplication between levels of government and reforming the tax system, including replacing the GST.

[*Translation*]

We have done all that in a little over two months. Each of these measures is linked to a specific promise made during the electoral campaign. And now, in the Speech from the Throne, we are continuing to keep our promises. In fact, I was quite pleased to read the headline in *La Presse* this morning; there had been others like it during the campaign that had been just as positive.

The Speech from the Throne, like this government's mandate, originates from the red book, the title of which is *Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada*. We have provided Canadians with an action plan. We have run the risk of submitting a complete and detailed plan of action. We have done what no other party had ever done before.

Canadians are not afraid to go off the beaten path. They were not expecting miracles either. What they want and deserve is a government capable of taking up difficult challenges.

[*English*]

During the campaign I called it realistic hope for a better future for themselves and their children, for a prosperous economy in which they can contribute, for a society that is compassionate and caring, for communities that are safe and

decent, for a government that represents them, that believes in the same things they do.

Canadians opted for realistic hope for the future and they invested their hopes in this government. On behalf of the men and women who were elected to form this government I would like to tell the Canadian people we will not let them down. What we will do is work to respect what we said to the Canadian people we were going to do.

(1640)

This throne speech marks an important step in renewing the faith of Canadians in their institution. The agenda is ambitious but it is doable and it is the agenda Canadians have chosen. We must build on the goodwill and the renewed confidence in institutions that the government's actions have created among Canadians. The people of Canada said loudly and clearly during the election that they want to return integrity and honesty to government.

The government understands that desire and will act on it with concrete measures early in this session. We have already sent very important signals. The work of the Hon. Mitchell Sharp is a powerful message to Canadians that government can be a force for good in society, that public life is a very honourable calling and that we are here to serve others, not ourselves. That is how we intend to conduct ourselves throughout our mandate.

However it is not enough to clean up the system. Canadians voted for something more. They voted to return power to the elected representatives here in the House of Commons. We made commitments to the Canadian people to give the House and members of Parliament new relevance so that it once again becomes the focus of political debate and decision making in our government.

The government House leader will bring forward changes to the rules and practices of this place. We will give a much greater role to parliamentary committees.

[*Translation*]

I have asked the finance committee to come up with alternatives to the GST. Later on in the year, I will ask that they be closely associated with pre-budget consultations. The government will ask the parliamentary committees to submit our strategic policy as it relates to foreign relations and defence to a thorough examination.

This government is serious about the need for real political debates to be held in this House before decisions are made.

Earlier, during question period, the Minister of Finance suggested that a pre-budget debate be held in the House of Commons to allow the members to express their views on the coming budget, and I wish to commend him for that initiative.

We will also have a debate in this House on the role of our peacekeeping forces in the former Yugoslavia because, as you know, difficult decisions will have to be made when the time comes to renew mandates, in March and April. And I want the hon. members to have an opportunity to debate the issue.

[*English*]

I would like members to have the occasion to debate it before, including the members of my party. I would like everyone to speak very frankly. After that we will make a decision knowing what everyone thinks. Particularly for my party it will be unusual because some members may take a position that is not in accordance with what we will eventually decide. However in a democracy we go along with the majority view, the decision of the authorities. I hope the opposition parties will realize this is a new opportunity we are giving to this Parliament so that we can know exactly what members think before, rather than us making the decision. I have been there. It is a terrible job to be in the opposition and I do not want to go back there.

I want members to speak first. Of course they will criticize after that, but we will compare their first speech and the second one.

[*Translation*]

These reforms are part of our efforts to bring government closer to the people and to restore trust between them.

(1645)

A government must act in the best interest of all members of society, mainly by promoting job creation, fostering economic growth and creating opportunities.

[*English*]

The economic policy of this government can be summarized in two words: jobs and growth.

During the course of this debate the President of the Treasury Board will speak about the national infrastructure program. The Minister of Industry will elaborate on government policy with respect to small and medium sized business. The Minister of Human Resources Development will speak about the youth corps and programs to help the transition from school to the workplace. The Minister of Finance has begun a consultative process across Canada before presenting next month's budget. He is committed to getting the economy moving and to creating jobs.

Through a combination of expenditure restraint and economic growth we will succeed in reducing the deficit. We are determined to achieve our goal of 3 per cent of the deficit in relation to the GDP.

We will not throw people out of work simply to be able to say that the deficit has come down. Yesterday the member for Madawaska—Victoria said it very clearly in a way we on this

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side believe it should be said, as do some on the other side too. He used a phrase all of us should keep in mind: the government should be lean but not mean.

In fact our approach to economic policy will be guided by the need to prepare Canadians for the jobs and economic opportunities of the 1990s and the 21st century.

We will invest in Canadians, in training programs and programs to improve literacy and other basic skills.

[*Translation*]

Our agenda for job creation and economic revival is an ambitious one and, as everyone knows, our resources are limited. A government cannot do everything and, in 1994, it should not try to. This is why we are going to count on partnership to boost growth and job creation.

We will work in partnership with other levels of government to implement our infrastructure program, to reduce internal barriers to trade, to replace the GST and to reform our social programs.

We will work in partnership with the private sector for job training and the youth service corps and for helping—and this is very important—financial institutions to better recognize and better meet the capital needs of small and medium-sized businesses.

[*English*]

This partnership will also extend to our work in knitting together a stronger social fabric in Canada.

Our number one focus will be the economy, but a strong economy is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end, to better lives for Canadian families, to healthy caring communities, to a decent quality of life. This is the essence of what being a Canadian is all about.

Canada's social security system was created by successive federal governments. A cornerstone of our philosophy is the principle of shared social responsibility. We are extremely proud of the Liberal legacy in social policy. In fact, the father of our Minister of Finance was one of the fathers of this great system. I was here in this House to vote on many of these measures.

(1650)

We believe that people experiencing economic difficulty must have income support available to them through social assistance. But it is our goal to help people on social assistance who are able to work to be able to move from dependence to full participation in the economic and social life of Canada.

[*Translation*]

We know that the jobless do not want to be unemployed. Canadians want to earn their living honourably. They want the

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dignity of a job. We must therefore design programs which will help them find work.

We know that the poor do not want to live in poverty. Canadians who are able to work do not want to collect welfare. Our programs must therefore help, for example, a single mother who does not have access to child care services; otherwise, she will be forced to remain dependent on the state for many years.

We must admit that Canadians have never faced so many social and economic challenges since the depression of the 1930s.

The structure of our economy is changing and the family unit has been deeply transformed. We must therefore reform our social security system to meet the needs of Canadians today.

The minister of human resources will announce a process to rethink our social security system and to modernize it, in co-operation with the provinces and for the greater good of all Canadians.

[*English*]

During the course of this debate the Minister of Health will speak about the commitment of this government to health care and to women's health issues. The Minister of Justice will speak about measures we will take to protect individuals from crime and violence in their homes. He will speak about measures which enhance our commitment to the fundamental equality of Canadians.

These are areas in which a society is judged. This government wants to play its role in ensuring the fabric of Canadian life continues to be tolerant and generous and that the quality of life we all cherish and which is so distinctively Canadian improves and benefits all Canadians.

The agenda is full and it will require co-operation and a sense of a shared mission which our country has not seen for a long time, the kind of spirit we saw at the first ministers meeting in December. Canadians are ready for this national will. They want those of us who are in responsible positions in government and the private sector to work together toward those worthy national goals.

[*Translation*]

I wish to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his speech. It is a first in the House of Commons, in a quite unprecedented situation, as he said himself. I do not intend to respond to all the arguments he put forward, because I think the debate would be rather sterile. In the election campaign, we talked a lot about jobs, we talked a lot about the deficit in Quebec and we maybe talked a little about independence and separation, but not much. I know that if I got into that subject, I

would not be fulfilling the mandate which I received from the people of our country.

Besides, my convictions are well known. I have been here for many years. I would just like to tell you that my convictions about Canada are based perhaps on a text which describes our country very well. A hundred years ago, one of my predecessors, Laurier, spoke thus, as the twentieth century approached:

We are French Canadians, but our country is not limited to the territory around the Citadel in Quebec; our country is Canada. Our fellow citizens are not only those who have French blood in their veins. They are all those, regardless of race or language, who have come here among us as a result of the vagaries of war or the whims of fortune or by their own choice.

(1655)

These words are just as appropriate today, on the eve of the 21st century, as they were at the beginning of the 20th century.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): I also want to mention that it is true that we did not get as many votes as the Bloc québécois. We will change that next time, but it is the reality now.

But I have something to say to the hon. members who were elected in Quebec and who are French-speaking Canadians like me. Something happened this week in this House, something which they should have noted. First, we chose a Speaker. Two French-Canadians from Ontario got the same number of votes in the fifth ballot, which means that, at one point, all the members of this House voted for a French Canadian. One won and one lost. But in a sense it is very telling that a person like the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier who, throughout his career, has always been proud to be a francophone and has always said it loud and clear, got such support.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): The hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria, in New Brunswick, rose in this House to second the motion in reply to the speech from the Throne.

I have had the great honour of being the member for Beauséjour and to rise in this House to represent francophones, francophones from New Brunswick, and Acadians who were deported and who came back. And those one million francophones outside Quebec are part of my country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): The Leader of the Opposition talked about progress and about preparing for the 21st century. I agree with him. I look around this House.

[*English*]

I see these members of different colours, religions and languages who are all members of the same family in my party and of the same country of Canada.

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If we know how to capitalize on our strengths and our potential, if we look for new solutions, and if, while facing the tasks awaiting us, we can communicate our hopes and our energy, we will restore the confidence of Canadians in their government. A country which was able to overcome its problems, which is competitive and which becomes more powerful and more independent, is a country which will be a model and an inspiration throughout the world.

[English]

In short, what Canadians want is a country to be proud of and to believe in. That is the challenge not only for this government but for this Parliament.

(1700)

It is in that spirit that I invite the men and women of all parties in this House to join us in this national effort. I invite them to put aside old tactics that have so frustrated and embittered Canadians. I invite them to work with us in improving this country.

I am convinced that the new spirit that men and women elected to this House are bringing with them makes it possible for us to enter a new constructive era together. We all have an obligation to uphold the confidence Canadians have invested in each and every one of us.

Together we can prove that their confidence was not misplaced. Together we can do what every generation of Canadians did when put to the test and that is to meet challenges head on, beat the odds and build the country.

It is our mission to take this country and prepare it for the 21st century, to make sure that we will give our children and our grandchildren this land of freedom, opportunity and justice which is an example to the world. Today, as Prime Minister of this land, I tell everyone that the world needs the understanding, tolerance and justice that this country has been able to prove over the years. For me Canada is and will always be number one.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I wish to begin by congratulating you on your election to the office of Speaker and to offer you the co-operation and support of our Reform members.

Canadians made it abundantly clear on October 25, 1993 that they were not pleased with the performance of many members of the 34th Parliament and that they clearly expected a different style of conduct from the members of this Parliament.

As both a member and the presiding officer of this House you have a mandate from the people to encourage a higher standard of behaviour. As a group, we pledge our co-operation with you in discharging that mandate.

[Translation]

I would also like to congratulate all members for their election to the Canadian Parliament, and in particular the right hon. member for Saint-Maurice who was elected prime minister of Canada.

There are several people whose ambition to become prime minister exceeded that of the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien, but very few people have served their country, the House of Commons and the government as faithfully as he has. I think it is important for new members in this House to see that not only ambition, but experience, knowledge and dedication are also rewarded.

(1705)

A great man once said: He who wants to be a leader must be at the service of others. We would like to congratulate the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien who has become our leader.

[English]

Third, I want to especially thank the electors of Calgary Southwest for giving me the opportunity to represent them in this House.

I know from months of town hall meetings, surveys and door knocking that our electors have definite hopes and aspirations for this Parliament. They hope against hope that we will be able to control federal spending and taxation. They hope that we, the members of this Parliament, will be free to represent their interests even if that conflicts with our party line. They hope that we will be capable of giving to all Canadians a fresh and vigorous vision of a new federalism capable of carrying us into the 21st century.

I feel, as I am sure all members feel, an enormous sense of responsibility that we do not frustrate those hopes and aspirations.

I realize—and many of us as new members have been reminded of this on numerous occasions already—that much of the conduct of this Chamber is frequently bound by precedent. However, there is a sense in which the 35th Parliament should consider itself a House beyond precedent.

The reduction of the representation of a traditional federal party in this House from 152 seats to 2 seats is unprecedented in the history of federal politics although this fact does not seem to have registered yet on the member for Sherbrooke. The election of over 200 new members has already been referred to and is also unprecedented. The ideological and geographical alignment of the political parties in this House is also unprecedented.

In other words, in electing this House Canadians themselves have broken with precedent. Therefore we believe it would be fitting that this House also break with precedent in some important areas, especially in the conduct of its own business.

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For example, our Reform group does not intend to conduct itself as a traditional opposition party. We feel ourselves bound to rigorously scrutinize everything that the government puts forward but we do not consider ourselves bound to oppose everything that the government puts forward.

In scrutinizing the speech from the throne we will seek to identify and give credit to the measures we consider good. We will also seek to identify and expose those measures that we consider weak or ill-advised but when we do the latter we will feel an obligation not simply to criticize or oppose but to offer constructive alternatives.

We think of this House, which is beyond precedent, as a three-cornered House. There is the government, the Official Opposition whose members wish to take their province out of Canada, and Her Majesty's constructive alternative.

In keeping with this positioning, our principal contribution to the throne speech debate will be threefold. We will analyse the government's program from a variety of perspectives: fiscal, economic and social. We will offer proposals for improving the government's legislative program in the interests of all Canadians and we will put forward a subamendment designed to improve the government's program. The passage of our subamendment should not be viewed as an expression of non-confidence but as a constructive addition which government members themselves could support.

Allow me then to speak for just a moment on the most commendable feature of the speech from the throne, its greatest weakness and a proposed improvement.

(1710)

We believe that the most commendable feature of the speech from the throne is its promise to enhance the credibility of Parliament. However the objective of any parliamentary reform in our judgment should be to create a freer Parliament, not just a more efficient one, a Parliament where members are free to express and vote the positions of their constituents even when it conflicts with party lines.

Parliamentary reform of course, including this type of reform, has been promised before. Hopefully this government intends to act on its promises. The public is tired of the hollow eloquence of words and longs for the eloquence of deeds.

For example, nothing would enhance the credibility of Parliament more than the institution of genuinely free votes. What we and many Canadians would like to see is for the Prime Minister to rise in his place today or tomorrow and clearly declare to you, Mr. Speaker, the following policy as a policy of his government: That the government will not consider the defeat of a government motion, including a spending measure, to constitute an expression of non-confidence in the government unless it is

immediately followed by the passage of a formal non-confidence vote.

That takes about 30 seconds to say. I say to the Prime Minister if he were to do that he would be known as the liberator of Parliament no matter what.

We hope over time that this House and even the media will come to see cross-over voting, the number of times that a member crosses over party lines in the interest of constituents, not as a sign of party weakness or dissension but as a sign of the strength of genuine democracy in this Chamber.

At the beginning of this session we want to commend the government's commitment as contained in the speech from the throne to enhance the credibility of Parliament. We think that is one of the strongest features of its program if it follows through on it.

Allow me to turn to the greatest weakness of the government's legislative program and the area that we feel is most in need of improvement. All members are aware of the fiscal legacy which the previous Conservative administration left to the people of Canada and to the 35th Parliament. The distinguishing features of that legacy are, and this is the bottom line of the fiscal regime of the government that preceded this government, a record federal deficit for 1992-93 of \$40.5 billion and a total federal debt as of noon yesterday of \$500 billion.

I say to hon. members that the greatest challenge facing this Parliament, whether their commitments are constitutional, social or to jobs, is to control federal overspending. I frankly expected that challenge to be acknowledged and addressed more forcefully and directly in the government's legislative program, not just in a budget two or three months hence.

Traditional throne speeches, and this speech is very traditional, always listed things that governments proposed to do. However the throne speech of a government that is \$500 billion in debt ought to contain a new section listing the things that government proposes to stop doing. This speech contains no such section. Perhaps the Minister of Finance was not given equal time in its preparation. It would be vastly improved if it did and if it included such items as the following: a specific commitment to stop the payment of premature and excessive pensions to parliamentarians; a commitment to stop subsidizing crown corporations to the tune of \$6 billion per year accompanied by a schedule for the gradual elimination of such subsidies; a commitment to reduce non-salary overheads of government departments and agencies by at least 15 per cent; a commitment to stop paying OAS and other income transfers to high income households; a commitment to stop regional development programs that simply do not work; and a commitment to identify and eliminate all unnecessary government functions.

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(1715)

To remedy this weakness in the government's legislative program, I ask this House to consider restricting its spending in the fiscal year 1994–95 to less than \$153 billion by adding a simple spending cap to the government's legislative program.

Members familiar with the government's financial statements will know that the federal government is currently projected to spend \$162 billion in 1994–95. The spending cap we propose represents a 6 per cent reduction in that amount. How such a reduction should be made can be the subject of the budget debate and speech. The point of adding the spending cap to the government's legislative program now is to send a signal to investors and taxpayers that in the very first days of this session members on both sides of the House are deadly serious about reducing federal spending.

The subamendment I will propose is an expression of non-confidence in the spending patterns established by the previous government. Is there any member of this House, with perhaps one or two exceptions, who could not vote for that? This amendment or subamendment is not an expression of non-confidence in the government's legislative program. It is a simple improvement which says: Whatever legislative program this House adopts we must not spend more than \$153 billion on its implementation in 1994–95. I invite all members of the House including government members to support this spending cap.

In conclusion, yesterday members honoured an ancient parliamentary tradition by following you, Mr. Speaker, to the other place and by listening to the speech from the throne and by claiming all the ancient rights of the Commons in the name of the people. The most important of these ancient rights, indeed the first function of the early British Parliaments, and the first function was not a legislative function, the only function of the original Parliaments was to constrain the spending of the crown.

I implore the members of this House to reassert this right of the Commons, not simply in symbolism or in words but by legislative action, by crowning the speech from the throne with a spending cap.

I move:

That the amendment of the leader of the opposition be amended by adding immediately after the words "federal administration" the following words:

particularly the need to restore public confidence in the ability of this House to control the federal deficit and overspending and to limit the government's spending in the fiscal year 1994–95 to less than \$153 billion.

(1720)

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, let me first of all congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the House of Commons. Certainly, your experience in Parliament and your qualities of heart and mind contributed to your being chosen by your peers. I am sure that you will assume your responsibilities with great skill and competence and you can certainly count on my support in the performance of your duties.

I would also like to take the opportunity, as is the custom, to congratulate the movers of the motion in reply to the Speech from the Throne. In their own way, they each reflect what Canada is. With their respective knowledge and abilities, they are both a credit to their constituents and have begun a career in the Parliament of Canada in fine style, and I wish to commend them both.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, who is not only a friend and a classmate but also a fellow parliamentarian, who in this last federal election had a very important personal success at the polls. Without a doubt, he won part of Quebec opinion over to his party, the Bloc Québécois, and at any rate his personal success exceeds what we would have wanted to see in Quebec.

In his new responsibilities as a member of the Parliament of Canada, I wish him the wisdom not only to meet his responsibilities to those who sent him here, but also to discharge the role that he must assume as Leader of the Opposition, which goes far beyond his own aspirations and what he would like to do here in the Canadian Parliament. I do not know how he can reconcile this twofold mandate, but I still wish him much success in this task.

I would also like to congratulate the leader of the Reform Party.

[*English*]

I think it is remarkable to see, at the occasion of the federal election, a party which began as a regional party reflecting the legitimate aspirations of the people of a region more or less becoming a national party. I would like to say to its leader at the very beginning of this new Parliament that we used to have representation by three national parties here in the House of Commons that respected the fabric of our institution and of our country, that fought vigorously from time to time for their respective interests but always understood and fought for a bilingual Canada.

I was very pleased to hear the Reform Party leader speaking in French in his first speech in the House of Commons. I think his

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party, which in its creation was regional, might have by his leadership the possibility of becoming a true national party. In doing so it would be in the interest of the unity of Canada and the continuity of a strong and united Canada from sea to sea to sea.

(1725)

[Translation]

Finally, I want to congratulate all those who have been elected in the last election. Our responsibilities as parliamentarians are obviously significant but the most difficult test to pass is sometimes, in fact always, the election test. And everyone here deserves to be congratulated for having passed this test. I for one would like to thank my constituents from Papineau—Saint-Michel who, for the ninth time, have given me their trust and have allowed me to sit again in the Parliament of Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Ouellet: Let me tell you where I stand in relation to the Leader of the Opposition, who speaks with conviction but whose argument in this debate I cannot accept. While he wants to build a new country, I want to improve mine. It appears to me that his approach is as sincere as mine. Like me, he comes from a Quebec rural area; he is from Lac-Saint-Jean, I am from Saint-Pascal-Kamouraska, in the Lower St. Lawrence region. My father was a country doctor, my grandfather a farmer. I studied in French. In this country of mine, I gained many times the trust and respect of a majority of people who do not speak my language, who do not share my culture and whose traditions are not the same as mine.

Although part of the minority, I was able to work and assume responsibilities without any difficulty in this country. The Leader of the Opposition himself once assumed very important responsibilities within a Canadian government. He himself agreed to represent his country, that is, Canada, overseas. He was even called “Excellency” and he did not complain. This is to say that this country is a country of great tolerance, compassion and opportunities for everyone who wants to take advantage of what it has to offer.

The Leader of the Opposition is a clever speaker. Listening to his argument, I have noticed that he knows how to skip details and caricature the facts.

There is no doubt that when he referred to the Meech Lake Accord and to the Charlottetown Agreement, he not once reminded us that the Parti québécois, which is the head office of the Bloc Québécois, did not want to see the Meech Lake Accord nor the Charlottetown Agreement passed. At no time. I accept that some people may wish that all possible powers be granted to a State, a country separated and independent from Canada, but, please, do not make us believe that the Meech Lake Accord or the Charlottetown Agreement would have satisfied the Bloc Québécois or the Parti Québécois.

(1730)

So do not accuse those who might have been against the Meech Lake Accord of being traitors to Quebec. Many things have been said about the Prime Minister who had reservations and objections regarding certain aspects of the Meech Lake Accord.

Why would it be more serious for the Prime Minister, Mr. Chrétien, who was an ordinary Canadian at the time, to oppose Meech? Why would he be less of a Quebecer than Mr. Parizeau, who was also against the accord?

In fact, it is obvious that we will never agree in this political debate. As the Leader of the Opposition reminded us, for thirty years some people have been desperately trying to convince Quebecers that they would be better off if they separated from the rest of Canada.

Now I want to remind the members across the way, not those sitting at both ends but those in the middle, that during all that time they have been able to benefit from our democratic system, of the Canadian federal system, to express their point of view, to put forward their arguments in the greatest respect of democracy and of individual opinion.

It is an exceptional situation that does not exist in every country in the world. A few moments ago, I heard the Leader of the Opposition make a comment. The only reason I am mentioning this is because he himself talked about it, and I will be careful since I do not want the media to quote me incorrectly. He said that a number of Central European and East European countries had gained their independence, their national sovereignty, so why would it not be Quebec’s turn to do the same. He knows full well the answer to that question.

In my capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I had the opportunity to discuss with representatives from all those East European and Central European countries at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. How many of those people—whether they be from Croatia, from Georgia or from other regions of Europe that just became independent—how many of those people would give up their newly-gained independence to become citizens of the province of Quebec in Canada? They would be very happy to be Canadians.

The Leader of the Opposition has the habit of always going back to the 1981 referendum to claim that it is our Prime Minister who, at that time, had—and I can quote him since I took notes—“led the assault against Quebec”. Why would he have led the assault against Quebec? The hon. member for Saint-Maurice was simply defending Canada. He was not against Quebec, he was for Canada. Today, many people consider it important and useful to defend Canada.

The Leader of the Opposition makes another error when he tells us that Quebecers will finally have the opportunity to vote for the status quo or for sovereignty in the next referendum. He does not recognize the reality of Canadian federalism when he talks about the status quo. Canadian federalism evolves

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constantly; it is transformed by decisions made by both federal and provincial governments.

(1735)

Over the years, the Government of Quebec has obtained a series of powers enabling it to take on full responsibility for areas under its jurisdiction, and in the past, legislative agreements were often used to give Quebec responsibilities which the other provinces did not have. My point is that the reference to rigid federalism is entirely inaccurate, and I think it is unworthy of the Leader of the Opposition, who favours a sound and structured debate, to say that the federalism we want is status quo federalism.

Finally, let me say that when the Leader of the Opposition starts speaking on behalf of Quebec, he is somewhat exaggerating his mandate and his role. He does not speak for Quebec. He may speak for Quebecers but he does not speak for Quebec.

Just now, he was saying that fifty members of the Bloc quebécois were elected because there was a political and economic crisis and it was therefore the Bloc's mission to try and deal with the recession and later on to deal with the political crisis through sovereignty.

I think he should at least realize this: If he and his fifty or so members were elected because of the economic situation and the political situation, he will have to admit there are people in Quebec who voted for him because of the economic situation and who did not vote for him for his political option.

The votes he got, if what he said earlier is still true, came from people who were fed up with Tory mismanagement, wanted to get rid of the former Conservative government and voted for him instead of for us.

However, in the process they did not give him the power to speak up for sovereignty and Quebec's independence. They gave him a mandate to discuss economic questions.

Mrs. Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata): Incredible.

Mr. Ouellet: The hon. member may think that sounds incredible, but I would like to say, in concluding, that I realize the Leader of the Opposition has certain responsibilities in this House and that he must act accordingly. I admit that during his speech he spoke at length about economic issues, and I agree that when the Leader of the Opposition talks about the economy, when he talks about unemployment and when he talks about social measures, he is doing what he is supposed to do as the Leader of the Opposition, of what is referred to as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

However, when he switches to his role as a supporter of Quebec's independence, he is no longer playing his part as leader of the opposition in a Canadian parliamentary system, under our Canadian Constitution. When he supports secession for Quebec, he is going far beyond the normal role of a leader of the opposition, whose aspirations are to become prime minister of the legitimate government, not to become the head of an independent State.

(1740)

I do not see how he will manage to reconcile these two roles. I know that he takes 100 per cent of the salary of the opposition leader as well as 100 per cent of all the benefits that go with the job. I can tell him that in his speech, today, he earned only 75 per cent of his salary.

In closing, I would like to say that the debate we must have with the Canadian population regarding the future of Quebec is a very important one. During the hearings of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, we hardly touched on the problems. The Leader of the Opposition referred to a document dealing with duplication. I must remind him, as he knows for sure, that this document was not prepared by the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, it was submitted to it. It was discussed by the Commission, but not commissioned by it. It was commissioned by Mr. Claude Morin for some students and faculties of the school of public administration (ENAP) in Quebec. Clearly, this is not a document you can consider to be thorough.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, when I heard the Minister of Foreign Affairs a while ago comment at length the speech of my leader, the Leader of the Opposition, I thought I was in the twilight zone. It was as though the minister had never lived through the last 15 or 20 years in Quebec and in Canada. It was as though the member for Papineau—Saint-Michel and his leader had never participated in the night of the long knives or the Meech failure. I also was led to believe that the member for Papineau—Saint-Michel had never worked for the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, that he had not understood the overwhelming message of the men and women of Quebec who testified in front of that commission. It was as though the reply of September 24, 1991, that of Beaudoin-Dobbie and of Beaudoin-Edwards, the July 7th Agreement, as well as the Charlottetown Agreement, rejected with a massive majority by Quebecers, had never existed. In one word, I thought I was on another planet.

When I heard the member for Papineau—Saint-Michel question the legitimacy of the vote expressed by Quebecers and the legitimacy of the Bloc Québécois as the Official Opposition, that helped me understand how the member viewed democracy. If the existence of the Bloc Québécois has but one merit, Mr. Speaker, it is certainly that of having launched the debate on the future of Quebec and of Canada and that was our first objective.

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Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would urge the member for Papineau—Saint—Michel to be a bit more democratic in the future when he speaks about the Bloc Québécois and about its role as the Official Opposition.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the member and to remind him that I am not questioning the legitimacy of the Leader of the Opposition in this Parliament. I congratulated him for being elected and bringing with him fifty or so members. What I said is that, once here, he cannot claim that he won strictly on the strength of his separatist platform. In this respect, I quoted his own speech in which he said that he came here because there was a problem with the economy. People voted for him and for BQ candidates not because of their political message but because of the economic situation. What I do not like is for the Leader of the Opposition to claim, as he just did in his remarks, that the referendum debate has started.

(1745)

If he wants to have a referendum debate here in this House, he might have the opportunity to do so. But above all, what is really important is for him to have a real dialogue on the ins and outs of such a process, and that is what I urge him to do. Bélanger—Campeau did not conduct such an in depth study. I sat on that commission and I saw how those who appeared in front of it and those who were leading the debate were all of the same mind and going in the same direction.

As a matter of fact, all those supposedly non-aligned people are now joining the ranks of the Parti Québécois, starting with Mr. Campeau and his cohorts. We now know that all those who then claimed to be non-aligned were indeed biased.

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member for Papineau—Saint—Michel be so kind as to clear up a point for me? Ever since the Liberal convention when the hon. member for Saint—Maurice became leader of the Liberal Party, it has been quite clear that from then on we would not hear a single word on the Constitution. That policy was confirmed after the demise of the Charlottetown Accord in English-speaking Canada and in Quebec. It was stated again during the election campaign that we would not hear any more about the Constitution. The economy would be the only topic for discussion.

But except for the few civilities that are in order, the Constitution was the only theme of the hon. member's speech. Are we to infer that the Cabinet is divided over this issue and that you are going to vote for the amendment moved by the hon. member for Calgary Southwest and leader of the Reform Party to the effect

that there should be more free votes in this House? I get the impression that you would feel more comfortable that way.

Mr. Ouellet: I welcome the hon. member's response to my comments. He speaks just like all other people in Quebec who resent Quebecers being told they stand to gain from being part of Canada. Each and every time we tell Quebecers there are benefits for them in being part of the Canadian federation, the proponents of Quebec independence always try to delude people into believing that our comments are inappropriate and inconsistent. Mr. Speaker, an enlightened debate on the consequences an independent Quebec would have is certainly in order.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Ouellet: I am delighted to see those members applaud. I am glad they sit in this House because their contacts with other members will help them do away with parochialism, widen their horizons and understand that there is a place in Canada, and a good one at that, for Quebecers who want to be part of this country and be respected in it.

Mr. Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I seek your guidance. Do I have the floor for a comment or for my speech?

The Deputy Speaker: There are two minutes left in the question and comment period.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): I will be pleased to use them to say a few words to the hon. minister who has just spoken. He says we do not speak for the men and women of Quebec, I wonder whose interest he has at heart?

When he says that we have benefitted a lot from federalism, he fails to mention that we had to fight the system in order to get what we got. Remember the fight of Jean Lesage. Remember the fight of Mr. Johnson, the real one, Daniel. Remember the fight of Mr. Bertrand—

(1750)

The Deputy Speaker: The time for questions and comments has now expired. I think that the hon. member for Richelieu is next.

[*English*]

I would like to thank members for not voting against me yesterday when my election was proposed. I have not worn this gown for 15 years; I am glad to see that it still fits. I want you to know that to get anywhere here you need to have names like my colleague's and mine.

[*Translation*]

More seriously, I will no doubt make mistakes over the weeks and months to come that will entail some problems and I would like to ask members from all sides to be patient.

The hon. member for Richelieu has the floor.

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Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your election and to congratulate also the Speaker and the Deputy Chairman of the Committees of the Whole for their appointment. As our leader has already done, I want to assure you that you do have our full trust, support and collaboration and that you have my personal support.

I would also like to take this opportunity, as this is my first speech, to congratulate the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister, my leader, the Leader of the Opposition, and the leader of the Reform Party for their election and to extend those congratulations to all the members present here tonight.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to complete my comment since I am lucky enough to speak right after the question period following the speech of the hon. minister. I would like to remind him of all the great battles we fought against federalism just to obtain a few crumbs. Let him remember also that federalism gave us the War Measures Act and the 1982 Constitution, signed without Quebec's consent. I can still see the Prime Minister and you sitting in front of the Parliament with the Queen of England in 1982 and celebrating the exclusion of Quebec from the Constitution; Quebecers remember also and maybe that is one reason why there are so many of us representing the Bloc Québécois here.

That is what you did. In 1982, you were with the Prime Minister celebrating the exclusion of Quebec. Would you have done so if another province had declined to sign the Constitution? Never! Quebecers did not forget and they wanted to show you so clearly by their votes.

Mr. Speaker, I would like first of all to sincerely thank my constituents in the riding of Richelieu who have once again placed their confidence in me in the election of October 25.

The riding of Richelieu, which I am proud to represent here, is typical of Quebec as a whole. For one thing, over 65 per cent of my constituents voted for the Bloc Québécois. Moreover, these people are going through very harsh economic times.

The riding is characterized by an active agricultural life, dynamic industries, the presence of members of the Abenaki Nation, seaport operations and burgeoning cultural activities. There are towns like Sorel, whose history goes back 350 years, and Nicolet, with its Museum of Religions. I could also mention the beautiful farmlands of St-Ours, Ste-Victoire, St-Robert, St-Aimé, Baie-du-Febvre, Ste-Gertrude and parts of the lovely towns of Bécancour, La Visitation, St-Zéphirin, Précieux Sang and Nicolet. There are also the commercial fishermen in Pierreville and St-François, the big iron and steel companies in Sorel and Tracy and the high technology companies of the Bécancour industrial park, the biggest industrial park in Quebec and the whole of Canada. Unfortunately, as elsewhere in Quebec, the region is struggling with an unusually high unemployment rate

and some serious social problems, like poverty and dropping out of school.

On September 4, 1984, I was elected for the first time as a member of this House. The mandate my constituents gave me was clear: I was supposed to strive to bring about real change and fight for their interests. During the debate on the first Speech from the Throne of the conservative government, I denounced the waste and chaos resulting from 15 years of liberal power. Pierre Trudeau's team, of which today's Prime Minister was one of the main actors, left Canada a huge debt, inconsistent policies and constitutional squabbles that were almost institutionalized.

(1755)

If I interchanged the names of the parties today in this House, I could make almost the same speech as I did in 1984, after the Speech from the Throne.

We had hoped that things would change for Quebecers and the people of Richelieu, but they have not. The Conservatives too left Quebecers with an enormous debt, inconsistent policies and a constitutional disaster.

Unemployment is still alarming and is forcing thousands of Canadians into inactivity. More than ever before, businesses have problems upgrading their facilities. Like never before, farmers will have to face the new GATT realities. Our youth are lacking resources to start businesses. The gap between the poor and the rich is constantly widening.

The people of Richelieu also share with other Quebecers the huge legacy that was left by the old federal parties: a \$46 billion deficit and a \$500 billion debt. Think about it: that represents a \$100 000 one-family house for 5 million Canadian families.

The people of my riding must also deal with the overlapping between Ottawa and Quebec programs in the areas of professional training, health, education, environment, communications and assistance to businesses. Another concrete example of Quebecers paying twice is the Nicolet Police Institute, in my riding.

For instance, a municipality such as Tracy, which is located in my riding, wants to have one of its police officers specially trained in criminal investigations and has to send him to the Nicolet Police Institute, but the municipality must pay for the cost of that training. On the other hand, for other municipalities throughout Canada, there is the Canadian Police College.

These municipalities also send their police officers for training in specialized fields like criminal investigations, but in their case, the federal government pays for all the costs of the programs. Quebecers pay 100 per cent of the specialized training for their police officers and also 25 per cent for the cost of the Canadian Police College, since we represent 25 per cent of the Canadian population. That is a concrete example of overlapping which I see every day in my riding.

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Would it not be more normal that 25 per cent of the money paid to the Canadian Police College be given to the *Nicolet Police Institute*, so that it could offer free training to police officers who wish to specialize, the way it is in the rest of Canada? Here is a good example of costly duplication for Quebec.

Let me now give you, Mr. Speaker, some of my views on the throne speech presented by the Liberals. There is not much there to reassure me. I see no clear indication that the liberal government intends to deal with the real problems. I believe they will be much the same as the Conservatives.

What I gathered from that speech is that they are going to try and solve the problems of my constituents and Quebec people in general with the same, ineffective means used by previous governments.

What do they propose to deal with these problems? A National Forum on Health, when health is a provincial matter. Another forum to deal with foreign policy.

I could not possibly avoid mentioning the report of the Deputy Prime Minister regarding the new Secretariat for the North American Commission on Environment. We expected a clear decision which would have confirmed the role of Montreal as the centre for the environment, but that is not what the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment did. She asked a private company to prepare a report.

(1800)

We all know what type of mandates the Tories gave their friends who contributed to the election fund. Same solution, same procedure. I want them to know we will be on the look-out and we will remind the Liberal Party of its commitment in this matter. I am eager to see what the price of those consultations will be.

Let me remind my colleagues across the way that the Auditor General's report is very clear on this. By the way, what were they all doing yesterday, in the beautiful city of Ottawa, after the Speech from the Throne? They were squandering money. And what did the Liberals do, after promising to curtail expenses? Dressed in tuxedos and ball gowns, they attended the ball of Her Majesty's representative. While the poor in my riding, in Manitoba and in Newfoundland sat in front of their TV set all day hoping for something real to come out of the Speech from the Throne, they went dancing. These poor people learned almost nothing from the speech; they learned though that you were going to the ball.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Plamondon: Did the poor people find a cause for hope? No! But no expense was too great for the others—caviar, wine, champagne; one hundred dollars per person maybe, approxi-

mately \$100,000 for a party for 900, at a time when people are starving. That is what you did yesterday. What surprised me most of all was to see the Reform Party members join in. You said when you arrived here that you would cut everywhere. You told the shoeshiner, who barely earns \$20,000 a year: "That's too much! We are sending you back on the dole". But you had no problem with last night's party. They want to cut the shoeshiner. They want to eliminate his job. They were even ready to discuss the price of a club sandwich in Parliament. Yet, they were all dancing about at the Governor's party. Members of the Bloc, however, kept their word and refused to be part of those unacceptable expenditures.

Our party has made the economic recovery one of its priorities. The Speech from the Throne does little to give back hope to the unemployed in my riding and to all those young people who want to work. The infrastructure program announced by the Liberals will bring no solution to structural unemployment. It will not allow workers to acquire the new qualifications they need to get tomorrow's jobs. Quite the contrary! It is to be expected that as soon as the work is finished, the workers will once more be unemployed.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, our party wants to do its part to eliminate the Canadian debt. The Liberal government systematically refuses to go to the roots of the public finance problem and submit to a rigorous review each and every federal department and organization, in order to cut the fat, as my leader said earlier. And we all know that there is still a lot of fat to cut. I mentioned the Governor General's ball earlier. Again this week, we saw how millions of dollars were spent by several federal departments to produce videos depicting the life of officers of the Canadian forces and on windsurfing safely. These are real examples of wasting of public funds and members of this House, including those who put on their patent leather shoes to go dancing at the Governor General's ball last evening, will have to work hard to eliminate such waste.

It should be noted that the Liberal government has in no way committed itself to reform the tax system in an equitable way and to challenge tax shelters such as family trusts. It is unacceptable that wealthy families be allowed to hide their fortune from the tax man while the burden of the middle class is constantly increasing. The Bloc Quebecois will fight in this place in order that any reform of taxation and social programs, in particular those for the poorest in our society, is done according to the principles of equity.

(1805)

I must say that I am also extremely concerned by the desire of the Liberal government to update, as it says, and to restructure social programs. After posturing as the defenders of social programs during the last electoral campaign, now the Liberals are threatening to do an about face and to slash the social safety net protecting Quebecers and Canadians.

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The Bloc Québécois will not allow such a reform to be carried out at the expense of the most vulnerable members of our society, the very same who are the first ones to be affected by the present economic situation.

Finally, the Speech from the Throne ignored altogether the Liberal promise not to cut transfer payments to the provinces. The Liberal government will have to deal with a block of members committed to preventing it from carrying out its fiscal reform on the back of the provinces, which have been doing more than their share for a number of years.

On the strength of the mandate given to us by Quebec voters, we are determined to talk in this House about real people and their problems. During the coming months, my colleagues and I will show the many failures of the Canadian federal system. We will do so at every opportunity.

We will talk about the slow death of Quebec regions, the victims of Ottawa's paralyzing centralism keeping people in the regions in a state of dependency.

We will be talking about economic recovery and industrial development policies that cannot get off the ground and are ineffective because they have fallen victim to all of the illogical government programs. We will be talking about the millions of dollars wasted left and right without any apparent logic and especially without any input from the people directly involved.

We will be talking about this country that is buckling under the weight of the debt load and that is incapable of achieving the necessary consensus to see things through. We will show that the sorry state of Canada's public finances is attributable not only to the actions of governments, but first and foremost, to a federal system which can only result in a stalemate.

We will be talking about this country struggling with the inconsistency and confusion of overlapping programs. In fact, there are more than 50 job training programs and sub-programs, not to mention matching programs set up by the provinces, particularly in Quebec.

We will expose this system which unfairly allocates job creation funds and fails to give Quebec its rightful share.

The Bloc Québécois will speak at great length in the days and weeks to come about the real problems. For the first and undoubtedly, I hope, the last time in the history of Canada, a political party that embodies hope for true change for Quebecers will be present in this House.

Setting aside arbitrariness and partisanship, the Bloc Québécois is here to say what the old federal parties have always prevented Quebec from saying.

Try as they may to escape reality, the Prime Minister and his colleagues will have 54 members of the Bloc Québécois sitting across the floor who, as they were mandated by their voters in

Quebec, will raise the real issues, flush out the real causes and put forward real solutions.

Firmly, but also respectfully, honestly and with no hard feelings whatsoever, we will explain to our colleagues from the rest of Canada what our vision for the future of Quebec is, a vision of a sovereign Quebec fully equipped with the tools essential to its development.

Contrary to what the Liberal government seems to think, for us, to talk about the Constitution has little to do with philosophy. It deals with concrete things like eliminating costly overlaps and waste. We, in the Bloc Québécois, insist that decisions be made by the people who will suffer the consequences. And that is exactly what we will do, in accordance with the mandate received from our voters, in the riding of Richelieu and throughout Quebec, to defend the interests of the people of Quebec.

I wish to thank once again the people of my riding for their show of confidence and I want them to know how proud I am to serve them here, in Ottawa.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what our colleague from Richelieu said, and I wish to congratulate him on his re-election to the House of Commons. We have known each other for a very long time, he and I, and we sat together on several committees, interparliamentary bodies and so on.

(1810)

I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I was rather surprised by what our colleague opposite said. He just said that since his arrival in 1984 or almost since then, he has found that the federal system was not working and, to quote him, that there was a lot of waste.

Nevertheless, a few years later, while he was still a member of the Conservative government, his present leader, when he got elected as a minister—he was a minister even before he was elected as the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, as I recall—some \$25 million in promises had been made for a byelection in Lac-Saint-Jean, Mr. Speaker.

An hon. member: To buy the voters.

Mr. Boudria: May I conclude that the member is now apologizing in a way for that by-election his leader won when he came to this House a few years later? Even more, given his denunciation today, how did he manage to be re-elected under the Progressive Conservative banner in 1988 before coming so late to this conversion which he just explained to us today?

Mr. Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question. I am happy to see him back in the House. I have had the honour and pleasure of travelling with him on business trips for the IAFSP, the International Assembly of French-Speaking Parliamentarians. I believe we did sit, full of

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hope, as Conservatives, with this difference that we saw the light.

I can assure you that one party or the other, it amounts to the same thing. In what situation were the Liberals, in 1984? They were rejected by the entire Canadian population, from Halifax to Vancouver. Why was that? Because they had put Canada almost \$200 billion into debt. They had completely given up the management of the country. They were voted out of office. What did the Conservatives do? We chose to believe. I did, I believed in the “beau risque”, in Quebec joining the Confederation enthusiastically and with dignity. I too believed in that “beau risque”. I came to this place and, together with capable people like the present Leader of the Opposition, we did our best to play fair.

What happened under the Conservative government from 1984 to 1993? The national debt grew from \$200 billion to \$400 billion, has now reached \$500 billion. There were constitutional issues then and there are still constitutional issues today. There was overlapping and there are still problems in that area.

Now, the same people who were voted out of office in 1984—the government leader and the minister who spoke earlier—are back. Why were they voted out? Because they did not know how to manage the country, they had put it into debt. How will the Liberal Party be remembered in the history of Canada? It will be remembered as the party that ruined Canada, and you all bear that responsibility when you are elected under the Liberal banner. Let us not forget that this is the party that voted the Clark government out of office saying: “With us, there will be no tax increases.” Joe Clark had promised to bring the deficit down from \$13 billion to \$10 billion. Yet the Liberals allowed it to rise to \$38 billion. They are the first to blame. The Conservatives too tried to get the deficit under control. They too failed.

The bottom line is that the problem rests not with the party in office, but with the system. That is what we want to work on.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I direct this question to my colleague from Richelieu.

I listened attentively to his comments and particularly to the comments of his leader. I listened attentively, as well, to the comments from the government benches. It was interesting that all these comments had a lot to say about the wallet and very little to say about the heart.

(1815)

I have spent all my adult life with this debate in Quebec and Quebec's place in Confederation. We are going to be revisiting it again, but I can assure my hon. colleague that he will be getting an honest debate and whatever happens, win, lose or draw, we

are going to be neighbours. At least he will have an honest debate. He will get it from us and I hope from the government.

In your comments you mentioned that Montreal would be a natural site for the NAFTA environmental secretariat. Could you tell me the names of the other Canadian cities that are in the running and why you think Montreal is the favoured city?

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind the hon. members that they must address their questions to the Chair. The hon. member for Richelieu has the floor.

Mr. Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer the last question: it was during the conference on the ozone layer, which was held in Montreal under the chairmanship of the mayor of that city. It was agreed then that, if a secretariat was to be established, it would be in Montreal where the international conference was being held. It is in that sense that a commitment was made and it is in that sense that I was reminding the government of that commitment. I was surprised to see the Deputy Prime Minister trying to attract this centre in her own riding, through a study done by a private business and a small contract awarded to someone. This is commonly known as patronage and it is in that sense that I raised this issue.

Earlier you said that we have also been talking for 30 years about debates and the presence of the province of Quebec. We agree with you that a debate must take place and we are convinced that, given their position, the new members of the Reform Party will make a great contribution to this debate. We want to have this debate precisely to arrive at some form of mutual respect between the two founding nations of this country, as well a new economic union based on the existence of two sovereign States.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member for Richelieu with reference to one of his remarks. In his enthusiasm he may not have meant what he said but he indicated that all the Reform members were in attendance at the Governor General's last night. Possibly the hon. member would like to refer to that remark and correct it for *Hansard*.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Plamondon: Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, we are also former Conservative members, if my memory does not fail me.

The hon. member will know that I have never said that I would not go to the Governor General's. I really think that it was an excessive expenditure. In a time of recession, the cocktail party we had at the House, after the Throne Speech, was sufficient. I think that we are exaggerating when, in a year of recession, we spend another \$100 a head for such a party, while the poor are having a rough time. That is why I said that. Nonetheless, I

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highly respect the Governor General who represents Her Most Gracious Majesty, whom we all like.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Richelieu for his excellent depiction of the situation of Quebec within Canada. It is true that every time Quebec gained something, it was after fighting against the outdated and inefficient system we are in. Canada is no longer the place that federalists describe but it is a failure that Quebecers will soon want to dissociate themselves from.

To the hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel, I say that had the Quebecers wanted to vote for federalism, they would have voted for you.

(1820)

And I will add for the benefit of my colleagues from the Liberal Party that while they were dancing at the Governor General's ball, I am sure that they were thinking of cutting health programs.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry but I must interrupt the hon. member. I think that your colleague is allowed to reply. You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Plamondon: I will just thank the hon. member for Drummond, with whom I had the honour of dining last night, for what she just said. While people were at the Governor General's ball, we had supper in a humble restaurant in Ottawa with the hon. member for Charlesbourg. It so happens that we talked about Her Gracious Majesty, saying that perhaps the House should have sent her a telegram of sympathy when she fell from her horse and unfortunately fractured her finger. Being completely conditioned by his job, the hon. member for Charlevoix, a veterinarian, pointed out to me that he was also glad that the horse—

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Environment and Deputy Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would like first of all to congratulate you at the outset of your mandate. I would like also to congratulate all my colleagues here on both sides of this House and tell opposition members that it is my hope that we will be strong adversaries but never enemies.

Like millions of my fellow Canadians, I was not born in Canada. As a young man, I came from very far, indeed from halfway around the world, to give my family and my children a wide range of opportunities that I could not enjoy myself. The island where I was born, Mauritius as it is officially known, was then a British colony and we had to exile ourselves in South Africa or Europe to get postsecondary education.

After having completed most of my postsecondary studies, I chose Canada as my country of adoption. Canada is as large as Mauritius is tiny. Its tropical climate gives Mauritius almost perpetual sunny and hot weather. But except for the geographical contrasts, the tiny island of Mauritius and the large Canada share striking similarities. Like Canada a former French colony, Mauritius would later be subjected to conquest and colonization by the British. Like Canada, it has kept the heritage of the languages and the cultures of both founding countries. In both cases, Parliament is bilingual, Common Law exists alongside the Civil Code, and the French language lived on and even thrived under the British regime and afterwards.

I was fortunate enough in my tender years to grow up in both the English and the French cultures and to benefit from both. I have always known from experience that it is possible to appreciate at the same time Molière, Victor Hugo or our own Gilles Vigneault, on the one hand, and Shelley, Shakespeare or writers of our time like Hemingway, Margaret Atwood or Michener, on the other.

My own experience in my family, with friends or in a number of occasions in my life have taught me that languages and cultures, far from dividing us, can be a valuable means through which people can meet, share ideas and be united in the same spirit. I speak three languages, since Creole is now recognized as an official language, but I would have dearly liked to get to know many more languages and cultures when I was young.

Just like Canada today, although English and French are dominant there, Mauritius is a genuine meeting point for all the most diverse religions and races.

(1825)

The most fortunate similarity with this small country and the very large one that Canada is could very well be their sense of peaceful democracy, where individual liberties and human rights are highly valued and represent a most precious asset.

When I first set foot in Canada, I felt at home right away, I felt comfortable and secure in this most democratic country. After living for a few years in British Columbia, I chose to move to Quebec 30 years ago.

I had the opportunity, during my career, to visit Canada coast to coast, to discover small and big lakes, cities, towns, and rural areas. I also had the chance during my life to visit many different parts of the world. I have seen the sun rise on the Zambezi, and set in Southern Australia.

The more I visit other countries, the more I appreciate other lifestyles and living conditions, and the more I appreciate Canada, its climate of profound peace and liberty, its profound democracy.

*The Address**[English]*

This is why today is a very special day for me. It is an especially moving occasion for me, my first address in the Parliament of Canada. That I, who has come from so far away, indeed like many of my colleagues here in this House, should have the opportunity and privilege of taking a direct part in the political life of our country, is itself an eloquent testimony to the values of openness and generosity which characterize the Canadian spirit and way of life.

It is difficult for me to conceive that in theory this country could break up, not because of profound divergences as to the values, equity or democratic ideals that we share, but mainly because of language and culture.

It is indeed astounding to me to believe that we English speaking and French speaking Canadians who for close to two and a half centuries have shared geography and history, have shared the rigours and also the beauty of this vast land, but above all have contributed to building a common weal of shared values and experiences, a common way of life, a system of democratic politics and justice where fundamental freedoms have always flourished, could choose to tear up our common heritage because some of us live in French and some of us live in English.

[Translation]

I deeply respect the Quebecers who chose to be represented by a majority of members from a party advocating Quebec independence. However, while respecting that choice, I firmly believe that it will bring about results quite different from those targeted by my colleagues of the Bloc Québécois as their primary goal.

In fact, their very presence here is, in my opinion, the most vivid and eloquent testimony of the greatness and the democratic value of Canada. How many countries in the world would have been so democratic as to welcome with complete freedom, in a peaceful and serene manner, in their main Parliament, parties which might destabilize them, if not dismantle them? The members of the Bloc Québécois are the most striking evidence of the democratic value, the openness and the profound freedom of Canada.

(1830)

[English]

As we enter the 21st century I am proud to belong to a party whose mandate in this critical juncture in our history is to restore the confidence of Canadians in our political system, to restore in them hope for the future, to govern in truth, fairness and integrity and above all to preserve the Canadian federation and its shared geography and values from sea to sea.

If Canadians have now reached a level of such deep cynicism and mistrust in our own institutions and in our collective capacity to change our lives for the better, if so many of my

compatriots in Quebec are turning inwardly toward the parochial panacea of separatism, it is because our institutions have failed them in their justifiable expectations.

As the one truly national party represented in this House, our responsibility is an onerous one: to preserve the integrity of this country by showing Canadians that their institutions can indeed change their lives for the better.

In laying the foundation for the Liberal government's mandate and program, the throne speech confirms our electoral commitments to redirect Canada toward the path of recovery and job creation, after several years of economic recession and consequent unemployment.

However it calls for far more. It calls for the restoration of integrity, honesty and responsible management in the conduct of our affairs. It calls for the government to set an example, both real and symbolic, of the kind of restraint and discipline that it asks of others. It calls for the renewal of hope for our young people, so dynamic, increasingly well qualified, yet for a very large number of them, despairing of that first job which will be the start of a meaningful career. It calls especially for our seniors and the disadvantaged in our society for the maintenance of our social safety net created and nurtured by Liberal governments over the decades.

It will mean a new approach to unemployment and welfare support systems that through training and other positive and constructive programs will give hope and dignity to the unemployed and their families. It will mean a more decisive place for women and minorities. I am so proud there are so many women and minority representatives in our ranks. It certainly means the recognition of the aspirations of our first peoples in the objective of taking charge of their own ways of life within Canada.

Importantly it reconfirms the status of our two official languages as the precious expression of our foundation and evolution as a fair country. In "Creating Opportunity", the Liberal electoral program, our party has set the course toward a sustainable society, a goal we should all endorse regardless of party affiliation.

No longer can we accept a society of waste where unbridled consumerism results in the unnecessary degradation of ecosystems and the natural resources that are the springboard and sustenance of life and living. No longer can we tolerate the despoliation of the ample resources with which we have been blessed and for which we are trustees.

[Translation]

We must change our way of life and our way of producing and start respecting the integrity of the ecosystems and their capacity to maintain and renew themselves. In a world which is more conscious of global equity, of the need to distribute more equitably the wealth between rich and poor countries, we cannot

continue to consume energy and resources as frenetically as we have been doing in North America for the past fifty years.

If we still want to be taken seriously at the international level as sustainable development champions, we must set the example here, in this country, as a society that integrates its environmental concerns and objectives with its government objectives and methods. I am delighted about all the measures our government intends to take to integrate environmental concerns within a sound management process for our country.

(1835)

During the last two years, I had the privilege of working very closely with the Algonquins from Barrière Lake on a three-party agreement concerning an integrated resource management project in La Verendrye Park. This dynamic initiative, the first of its kind in Canada, not only reinforced my environmental beliefs, but proved once again that it is possible to reconcile the protection of our ecosystems with our ways of thinking and doing things. May I say how much we could learn on this issue from our First Nations.

[*English*]

The respect and love the Algonquins of Barriere Lake and certain other First Nations show for mother earth is a touching lesson for us all. It is one I find especially moving and inspiring.

[*Translation*]

Among the most precious resources for which we are responsible are the largest water reserves in the world. The renowned Canadian scientist Joseph MacInnis told me the other day that, during a recent conversation, the distinguished chairman of *National Geographic*, Gilbert Grosvenor, let him know that water would be the first and foremost priority of his internationally acclaimed publication during the 21st century.

[*English*]

We are blessed with the enjoyment of the greatest freshwater system in the universe: the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin. It constitutes 80 per cent of the total freshwater reserves in North America and 20 per cent of the world's reserves.

Water is a goal of our new age, of the 21st century and beyond. To provide an idea of the magnitude of our dependence on the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence water, we draw from the ecosystem each day, on both sides of the border, 655 billion gallons of water. That is equivalent to 2.5 trillion litres. If we were to store this water in jumbo tank cars, it would be equivalent to 19 million tank cars of 34,000 gallons each. These tank cars, if tied together, would stretch over 237,000 miles. That is the equivalent of 9.5 times the circumference of the world at the equator.

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I have heard it suggested in scientific and environmental circles that the Great Lakes basin may become the population magnet of the 21st century. With the west and southwest of the continent drying up, with the groundwater table close to exhaustion in certain areas, a large migration of people northward toward the essential and crucial resource that is water is a distinct possibility for the future.

Needless to say, we will have to do better in our stewardship of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence if we are to accommodate the large numbers of fellow citizens who may choose in future to take advantage of this unmatched resource.

We will have to do considerably better than today. The record shows that in 1990 we were dumping into the Great Lakes seven million gallons of oil, 80,000 pounds of lead, not to mention 1,900 pounds of PCBs and 1,000 pounds of mercury.

We must strive to build this new sustainable society around a clean industry strategy which would include a binational clean strategy for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin where the bulk of our population lives and works.

(1840)

[*Translation*]

I cannot help but wonder how Joliette, Marquette and de la Salle would feel if they saw some of us renounce the great legacy of wide-open spaces that they left us. I hope that during the present term we will find a way to convince the Bloc Quebecois members and their followers that this great Canadian legacy which we built together is made up of too many common values and is the result of too many common efforts to be forsaken so lightly.

[*English*]

I close my first address to this House in praying that Canada and Canadian unity shall prevail and that it shall flourish into the 21st century and beyond and that our great traditions and values of democracy, peace and freedom will continue to mark our lives together.

Long live Canada. May Quebec and its immensely proud and rich heritage and contribution be always a vibrant and crucial part of it.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

M. René Laurin (Joliette): Madam Speaker, I am proud to be given the opportunity to comment on the remarks made by the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis, and to correct a few historical facts.

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The hon. member for Lachine—Lac—Saint—Louis reminded us that Mauritius and Canada had had a similar history, telling us how important it is for him that Canada preserves—as Mauritius did—its reputation as a land of freedom. However, one should remember that before joining the Canadian Federation, Quebec was also a land of freedom, a land of belief, a land of respect—respect for the established order, for men and women, for the family, for the fundamental and traditional values that had made Quebecers—whose ancestors were French—a noble people, proud of its origins.

When Quebecers decided to join the Canadian Federation, they did not do so because they believed they would give themselves new fundamental values they did not have yet; Quebecers decided to join the Canadian Federation because they wanted to develop their own values and to share them with another people, the English Canadians.

Today, when Quebecers are thinking of another way of living, they do not do so because they have something against their partners of 1867 or because they despise English-speaking people; they do so because they now fear the system they had accepted to be part of since that time. They think that system may deprive them from now on of their right to speak, their fundamental values, their traditions and their culture. They are concerned that the Canadian Federation will no more enable them to maintain this heritage they received not from the Canadian Federation but from their forefathers long before the Canadian Federation.

(1845)

Why is it that the hon. member believes that if Quebec should become sovereign all of a sudden, he would lose all his rights?

Why does he think that if it became sovereign tomorrow, Quebec would not enjoy those same privileges? Does he believe that the Canadian Federation is the only guardian of the fundamental rights of Quebec and that without that federation, without those fundamental values, Quebec does not have a future anymore? I would like the hon. member for Lachine—Lac—Saint—Louis to make some further comments on that, because I do not think that those values were given to Quebecers by virtue of the Canadian Federation. Those were values that they already enjoyed before they entered Confederation.

Mr. Lincoln: I do not know how the hon. member could conclude that I said Quebecers had no basic freedoms and no sense of family or values. I never said that. The point I made was that we have been together for nearly two and half centuries. We decided of our own free will, the French-speaking population and the English-speaking population, to join together in the

Canadian federation. And the same thing happened when Saskatchewan and British Columbia and others joined the Canadian federation. This does not mean there were no basic freedoms before. However, together we have built a country that is the envy of many nations because of its sense of freedom and democracy, which is particularly true given your presence here. That we can be here, like this, is tremendous. I think it is very exciting to have colleagues from all over the world, who enjoy every freedom here, and that I myself, who was born elsewhere, am here as a Canadian and a Quebecer and proud of it and, as part of the Canadian system, am able to enjoy a measure of freedom that is the envy of the other countries of this world.

I am not saying that if it happens to be the democratic choice of some Quebecers not to go their own way, that basic freedoms would crumble. I never said that. I never even mentioned it. My point was that what we have here, what we have built here together is something that is far greater and has far more scope than would be the case if we were to retreat behind our walls and do something that will deny the reality of people like the hon. member for Beauséjour who is also a francophone and wants to belong to this great francophone family within Canada.

That is why we must continue to defend the vision of those pioneers who looked well beyond the borders of Quebec. The St. Lawrence is the epitome of Quebec's culture and history. But why would Quebecers not be entitled to the Great Lakes as well? And why would Canadians living on the Great Lakes not be entitled to the St. Lawrence? That is my theory. Freedoms will continue to exist, both in Quebec and elsewhere, but I hope they will exist within a much broader and more exciting context than Canada. That is why I intend to fight very hard to defend those freedoms.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac): Madam Speaker, I knew the hon. member for Lachine—Lac—Saint—Louis, when he was in the National Assembly. I met him in Lac—Mégantic, a town not very far from my riding. I talked with him then and I was under the impression that he cared a great deal for Quebec. He was Minister of the Environment. That is why I was very disappointed by his speech where, despite the fact that he has been Minister of the Environment in Quebec and should make environment his priority, he barely talked about it.

(1850)

What I would like to ask to the hon. member for Lachine—Lac—Saint—Louis, who is parliamentary secretary to the Minister of the Environment, is whether he will push to have the North American Commission on Environmental Co-operation, created under NAFTA, in Montreal? It was agreed during the Rio Summit, with the Mayor of Montreal, that his city would be a centre for the environment.

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Mr. Lincoln: Madam Speaker, with all due respect for the member with whom I have had excellent relations at times, I think his mind must have been wandering when I read my speech because half of it was about the environment.

I spoke about protecting the ecosystem, about adopting a different way of life, about our water resources. I am sorry if he did not listen. I will gladly send him a copy of my speech if he wants one.

As regards your second question, you know our party is totally democratic. There is a caucus, there are democratic procedures.

[*English*]

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Madam Speaker, I would like to first of all in my remarks congratulate you on your appointment. I wish you well. Having served in the House with you for one term, you can be assured of my personal support and my party's support. We will do all that we can to assist you in the chair.

I would also like to congratulate the other Speakers and the Speaker of the House who won the election the other day. I think it is indicative that this Parliament will be different from any other we have seen in Canadian history. Who would have thought when there were only two names left on the ballot, even those of us who are not mathematicians and who thought it was all over on the fifth ballot, that we would come back for another vote.

I discovered in the newspaper yesterday that I had single handedly delivered the speakership to Mr. Gilbert Parent. I was interested and surprised to read that. I was asked if I in fact had done that by coercing my caucus into making sure he was voted for and whether my persuasive tactics and characteristics were put into play.

I would like to put on the record right now that had I gone into the persuasion mode it would have been over in three ballots. We would not have had to stay here for six ballots. Congratulations. You have a certainly exciting but large job ahead of you. Please be assured of our support for you and all other Speakers.

Second, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the constituents of Beaver River. As you know I served in this House as the member of Parliament for Beaver River since March 1989. I spent almost all of the last term here. Our campaign slogan for 1993 was "Let's do it again Beaver River". Of course we had a unique chance to make Canadian history again by re-electing a Reform member of Parliament.

I would just like to say that my job as the member of Parliament for Beaver River is that of one of servant. The constituents there saw fit to elect me again as their member of Parliament. I am proud and I am humbled to be their MP again. I was certainly pleased to see that my mandate went from 50 per

cent in 1989 to just a shade under 60 per cent in 1993. We should all be aware that all we had was one vote on ballot day and it is not by our merit certainly that any one of us is here tonight. Those people put their faith in us. We know for sure they want to see things done differently.

Let me just say again thank you to the people of Beaver River, a wonderful microcosm of Canada, albeit chilly tonight there, a marvellous farming, oil and natural resources community. Agriculture and oil are the two biggest industries in Beaver River. Unfortunately neither word appears once in the throne speech under my scrutiny.

Something is lacking. We will work together to make sure that these things are addressed very specifically because they are huge industries and resources in my constituency as well as in many others across the country.

(1855)

I would also like to congratulate the Prime Minister and many other members of this House on their re-election. It is pretty exciting to have been re-elected to this House of Commons. As we know, there were some pretty big changes. There are some new faces here, but I welcome back those of you who were re-elected. I would also like to congratulate those who have been elected for the first time. It is pretty exciting to see this many new faces here. I am pleased.

When I left here when the House disbanded in June many people whom I served with in the last Parliament were very friendly to me and I appreciated that. They said: "Deborah, see what you can do when you leave this place, now that we are recessing at the end of June, to find yourself some friends".

Madam Speaker, I stand before you again tonight to tell you that I have found some friends, both personal and professional. I would like to tell you that I got married this summer. I married Lewis Larson on August 7.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Miss Grey: We said at our wedding that one has a greater chance of being struck by lightning after the age of 40 than of getting married for the first time. So we are making Canadian history all the way. It was wonderful.

What I appreciate in a partner is when I can go home at night and just get so much personal support. That one person is certainly important and the most important, but I was told to find some friends. I did my very best and it looks pretty good from my viewpoint. I went from a caucus of one to one of a caucus and I like this a whole lot better. It is pretty exciting.

Thank you again for the support you have shown for us so far in the House. We look forward to working with everyone.

I want to pay tribute right now to the hon. member for Kamloops. It is interesting and life is ironic. I warmed exactly his seat and he warmed exactly mine. For now we have made a

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complete switch in seats and I like this a lot too. I hope he appreciates the seat which I kept warm for him for several years as well.

On to the throne speech. Let us look at some of the things that went right in the throne speech and some of the things that have gone wrong. Maybe there are some weaknesses in it. Far be it for me to stand here and be terribly critical.

We are all here, I believe, for one reason regardless of our political affiliation or the way we are trying to come at this. I think we all believe that we want this country to be a better place no matter what we think of it. We are here for that reason only because it is not fun commuting to Ottawa.

From this throne speech we realize that probably the main concern of all Canadians is that of economic insecurity. Certainly that is the real focus of this throne speech. People in this country realize that they are frustrated with high taxes. They fear for social programs or the lack of a real job.

The economic insecurity troubling Canadians certainly results from many factors both national and international. Granted, there is perhaps little we can do at the international level but there are many ways by which we can determine to move this country ahead economically within Canada's borders. The way we exercise that potential influence through our taxing and spending policies is all important.

Unfortunately for Canadians, for the past 20 years we have perhaps had too much government. Governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have spent too much, taxed too much and owed too much.

Let us not bicker. Considering the hon. members on the other side of the House with whom I sat, I remember well the back and forth volleys. The Conservatives said the Liberals left them the debt.

I do not want to see that happen again. Some of my friends over here will talk about those Conservatives. People do not care. What people are concerned about is that we dig ourselves out of this debt hole and they do not want to concern themselves with the fact of whomever it was who got us into it. We want to get out of this debt hole and we will do our best on this side of the House to make sure that we put policies into practice and support this government when it brings in legislation so that we can start digging ourselves out and not worry about who dug us in. Let us dig ourselves out. That is the focus we need to take.

We must break the cycle of spending more, borrowing more and taxing more. What a refreshing change if we would be able to stand here as parliamentarians and say that we believe in spending less and borrowing less so that down the road we will be guaranteed that we will be taxed less. I think the Canadian public would support that wholeheartedly.

We are aware that the annual deficit now exceeds 5 per cent of the GDP. This government has promised to lower it to 3 per cent during the life of this Parliament.

(1900)

That is noble and we will applaud that, but let us make sure that it is only the first step because 3 per cent of the GDP is still well up, \$20 billion or \$25 billion of an annual deficit. We will be digging ourselves continuously into that debt hole if we just function at that level.

Let us say for step one for this government it is 3 per cent of GDP but let it only be step one or phase one. Let us move rapidly toward a balanced budget so that we can break even with our arrears payments and then start making the actual payments on the mortgage.

We have spoken long and loud about this debt quagmire and we want to make sure that the Canadian public sees something in us in this 35th Parliament that we would be able to make some suggestions.

I am so glad to know that we have some economic specialists in my caucus now. I will leave that to them. It is marvellous because I have been able to turn that job over to them. I will let them deal with specifics about numbers and philosophies in terms of economics but let me say that we need to reform the economics of this country. The Minister of Finance is well aware of it and many of the Liberal backbenchers that I know and have spoken with are concerned about it as well.

Second, in terms of economics, what must we do with the pension plan for members of Parliament? I stand before you and before this House as the only member of my entire caucus who qualifies for a member of Parliament pension at this point. I speak wholeheartedly about this as well as with serious conviction that we just do not talk about it and try to make it look good on the outside. We should see substantive reforms in the MP pension plan that are really going to make a difference and not just say that we have made changes in it. Let us make sure that it is brought more in line with the private sector and that it is not such a completely enriched situation where no other Canadian citizen would qualify for such a ridiculously extravagant pension.

This process was introduced in 1952, the year I was born. It has been increasingly enriched far too much and almost in fact corrupted. Could we use that word? People in this situation will get into a program which is not actuarially sound. It is three or four times what every other pension plan is.

Let us work together on that. People do not want their members of Parliament to be poorly paid. We learned that in the campaign. People do not want their members of Parliament to sort of be put out to pasture and not looked after, but let us make sure that it is brought into line actuarially so that we are not doing anything any more extravagant than that for other Canadian citizens. I do believe that the Canadian public would go for that.

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I am sure that caucus would agree with my suggestion concerning these changes when they are brought forward and we look at the meat of the legislation. Please let us not tinker with the MP pension system just so it looks good. Let us actually make some substantive changes so that we can say that this was the government and these were the opposition parties—all of them in this House—that said they were going to change this and that will make a difference in the politics of this country.

What about reforming this place? Does Parliament need to be reformed? Yes it does. Of course you and I, Madam Speaker, sat in the last House and watched the use of closure and limiting debate literally dozens of times. Let me again assure my friends with whom I visited in the lobby the last time on this side that I am going to be watching and making suggestions. I know that many people now on the government side are going to be concerned about that and give really good guidance to make sure that closure and time allotment and all these things are not slapped in.

Let us make sure that the behaviour and decorum in this House change. The 34th Parliament and the 35th election issued an incredible warning from the Canadian public to all those who would run as members of Parliament. It was this: "If you people do not behave the way any of us would behave in our board-rooms, if you people do not behave the way we would behave in our classrooms or in our private lives then we will do something about it". They did so.

We should not ever think for a minute, those of us who sit here cosy today, that they will not do it to us too if we do not make sure that we clean up the behaviour and the decorum in this House.

Let me say I appreciate that in the first couple of days we have not had these spats. Let us make sure that whatever it is we feel so passionately about we still treat each other with that dignity and respect that every one of us deserved in our private lives and that we deserve as well in our public lives.

(1905)

There is a phantom in the Ottawa scene and it lives in this Chamber probably more than it lives anywhere else in this town or across this country and that is that it is so easy to become part of this group where we say: "We are here, we made it, some of us are back again and some of us are new here". There is something that is seeping through Parliament and that is perhaps that ego is number one. Let me remind all of us, myself included, that ego did not get us here, but it can get us out of here faster than anything we know of.

Let us make sure that we realize what our position is here and that is as a servant. We should not just say it so it sounds good, but say it so we believe firmly that we are employees of the

people who voted us in and sent us here. I believe that ego set a precedent in this place long, long ago and as my leader mentioned earlier, we will do things in this House to break precedent and I am excited about that.

Let us break the precedent of ego. Let us make sure that when we have new parties here, so many new members here and a new Speaker here that we break that phantom of Ottawa which has permeated this place and chase it out once and for all. Would we make an impression on the Canadian public? You bet we would. What a refreshing change that would be. Beware of the phantom of Ottawa that permeates this Chamber. Let us make sure that we behave in such a way that we are servants. We have an opportunity now like no other Parliament has ever had to have a fresh start and clean it out and make sure that we are going to make a more efficient, democratic and freer Parliament.

Let us make sure that if we talk about free votes in this House of Commons that they are free and not just that they sound free. In the last Parliament we had a few free votes and unfortunately the public saw on TV just a particular member. What I got to see was the whole thing where the whip or somebody would come around and try to convince someone: "Oh, no, you don't want to do that". Let us make sure that if we talk free votes then we really act on free votes. That will free this place up and chase that phantom out faster than anything else. I think the Canadian public would really notice that.

What about members of Parliament who get here and are safe for the whole term with a majority government? May we trust the people who put us here to be our board of directors so that they would be able to call us home as shareholders if we are not doing our job? I introduced and I am reintroducing my private member's bill on MP recall. Let us make sure that this Parliament is opened up. The phantom of job security here is so tight that nobody could chase us out. No executive director of a company would be allowed to be completely safe. Let us make sure that we open ourselves up.

I am glad to second our subamendment which will be voted on tomorrow. We cannot afford to not support a subamendment which caps the finances. We cannot afford to let parliamentary reform just slip out of our hands and talk about it so nicely and yet it did not really happen. What a sad legacy at the very beginning of this 35th Parliament if we were to just give up by default right at the beginning.

I want to finish now and conclude my remarks by just giving us all a word of encouragement, regardless of what party we are with and what our political philosophies. I have a tribute to the late Senator Stan Waters who knew many people in this House and who was certainly a good friend of mine. He was my only political ally here in 1990. Stan always said that whenever one is going ahead some place one must keep on marching no matter what deters one from that.

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It is not just for my party here in the House, but for every party, regardless of political stripe. Let us all get one sight in our mind and that is to make this a better Canada and make it a place where we are proud to go back on the streets or back to our constituencies and say: "I am a member of Parliament and I am proud of that". What a change that would be. Keep on marching.

(1910)

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, I too wish to congratulate you on your election. I am proud to represent the riding of Peterborough.

[English]

I do not know how many members, like me, are relishing this evening. I have been observing what has been happening over the last two or three days. Members will notice that the light seems to have changed. The mood has become quieter and the debate, in the middle of this discussion about the tragic economic problems we have and about the future of this great country, has become much more personal.

We have begun to exchange information about our ridings so that we can learn a little about where we come from. We have begun to exchange information about ourselves. The hon. member for Beaver River told us about her recent marriage, for example.

It seems to me perhaps it is on occasions like this and not when the media gallery is full that some of the key things of a Parliament like this are actually done.

My riding of Peterborough is often thought of as a microcosm of the province of Ontario, a bit in the way that Lac-Saint-Jean is a microcosm or special place in the province of Quebec. It is a riding that has been very hard hit by the recession. It is a riding that has great cultural and economic strengths and so it is a riding that has a great deal of hope. I would like members opposite, in particular, to know that.

As for myself, as quite a number of people indicated today, I am also an immigrant. I was not born in Canada. In fact my family is from Wales. Hon. members might be interested to know that the Welsh language is much older than French or English. It is at least 3,000 years old and has changed very little even though it is very vital today. Its culture is very strong. Six hundred thousand people speak the language in a tiny country. They are very proud of their heritage. I am very proud of that heritage just as I am very proud to be a Canadian and to represent Peterborough.

The debate today is about the revitalization of our economy and the future of Canada. I would like all members to know that even in this deep recession when the people of Peterborough are

really hurting their mandate to me was to revitalize the economy within an even stronger Canada. That is what I intend to do.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, I heard with interest the comments of our hon. colleague from Beaver River. I remember the days in the last session when I was sitting on the other side of the House and the several times we had an opportunity to speak to each other on an informal basis as members do.

I would not want Canadians to think it is only with the advent of this Parliament that members have been friendly to each other across party lines. They have had the opportunity of knowing and assisting each other notwithstanding that they may have disagreed on policy or otherwise.

I want to congratulate the hon. member on her recent marriage. I wish her and her husband the best.

(1915)

I have a question for the hon. member about the issues of recall and that of free votes. I am a fervent believer in increasing the number of free votes. Indeed the mother of Parliaments has considerably more free votes than we do. Government bills are often defeated by government members and the government does not fall automatically or an election is not called. We have twisted that convention very badly out of shape in Canada throughout the years.

By increasing the free votes we also increase, in my opinion, the influence of those who lobby parliamentarians. Quite often the fraternity we have, for lack of a better word, keeps us together and to a degree fends off the influence of lobbyists.

Would the member not agree with me that together with increasing free votes we have to increase the rules governing lobbyists and the registration of lobbyists in Canada?

Finally I would like to ask our colleague as well about recall and to give an opinion on that. Her and I are going to have to disagree on that one. I believe I was elected to make decisions on behalf of my constituents. I am to stand before them at the next election having had their opinions in mind all of the time. I must stand not just on one issue but on my overall performance as an MP and let them judge me at the next election. After all, I probably voted against the majority of my constituents on such things as abortion, and probably similarly on such things as capital punishment, and I was returned here with a relatively comfortable majority.

I believe very much in the Edmund Burke philosophy in that regard, that once elected you are a member for your constituency and for the country as a whole. You must stand on your record. If you do not do that you will always only represent the majority and never the minority within your own constituency.

The Address

Miss Grey: Madam Speaker, in the time we have remaining let me thank my friend from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his comments and make mention briefly of free votes.

There is a great possibility that would open it up to the lobbyists so let us make sure, as my hon. friend said, that we tighten up some of the regulations. Maybe we should go one step further and not give government funding to lobby groups. We might be surprised how the number falls off if such a thing happened.

The member and I also appeared on a TV show some time last year about the pensions of members of Parliament and we disagreed on that as well. I somehow think my side might win in that regard, being with the Canadian public. Nonetheless I respect his view.

Regarding recall it is easy to say: "My people sent me here. I am doing what I am doing because they gave me a mandate". Let us remember the reason we are here is three-pronged. First of all, is the mandate theory that I am here to do what I think is best. Second, is the delegation model where people would say: "Go do what you like. We put our faith in you and we will see you again at election time". Probably the healthiest of all three would be the idea of trusteeship: "You as constituents put faith in me as your member of Parliament. I will go and do the best job I can do, but I will make sure that I continue from time to time to get a reading in the riding. I would be the trustee". That does not mean I could disappear to Ottawa and say: "They gave me the mandate so I can do as I please".

We need to be very careful in that regard. It is important we put our faith in the common sense of the people who voted for us and say that member of Parliament recall is something. If I lay that open and lay myself open in front of my constituents it seems to ease the tension and they see that at least we are willing.

(1920)

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint Louis for his excellent speech this afternoon and also the hon. member for Beaver River, who I can say is a very kind person. She wrote me an excellent letter last winter when I was in the hospital, as many members on both sides of this House did. I appreciate that very much.

Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate you on taking the chair. I think it becomes you very well. I will likely have an opportunity to congratulate the Speaker in person. I would also like to congratulate the other two officers of the chair.

When I was sitting here this afternoon listening to the debate on whether we are going to separate this country or whether we are not, I found it rather depressing. As a result I threw away

most of my notes. Therefore, what I am going to say tonight is from the heart. That is not to say that my notes were not.

When we think of what it took in human work and human effort, in negotiation and flexibility of human nature to get this nation of Canada where it is today, I think all of us in this House and indeed across this country should exercise that flexibility and make up our minds that there is a bridge that can be built between human beings as well as across a river. Mental bridges or regional bridges in Canada, whether it be east, west, central Canada, Ontario, Quebec or Atlantic Canada versus central Canada, or whatever, are part of the uniqueness of this nation. As we start off this 35th Parliament it is very important that we realize and think about where we are going.

At the outset I want to say that I cannot in any way express my feelings in words as firmly and as sincerely as I would like. No matter where I am in Canada, I feel at home. I hope there is not another Canadian from sea to sea who does not feel the same way.

Whenever I am speaking to development groups, whether they be chambers of commerce or municipal councils or county or regional councils or whatever, I always impress upon them the importance of smiling to people on the street and saying hello. It is very important to welcome people to your community. You can do that by breaking the ice.

I believe there is an element developing in Canada where there is a coolness in one part of the country to people in the other. First of all we must remember that our ancestors put this nation together. They put it together through hard work and determination. Can anyone imagine the work it took to put the first railroad across this great nation of ours and why it was done? It was done to weld this country together economically and, hopefully, socially.

I have the immigration figures here for Canada from 1852 to 1972. It spells a story of immigration to western Canada. It spells the early days of immigration to—I do not call it central Canada, I call it by the names of the provinces—Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. We have some great heritage in this country, not only in physical objects but in messages, philosophies and mentalities that have been passed on to us through generations.

(1925)

I listened to the hon. leader of the Reform Party this afternoon. He had some particular views because he comes from another region of the country. I respect those views. I respect some of the views that have been put forward by the opposition. I cannot say that I go along with them, but they have the right to state them in this institution or anywhere in this country. We have to get down to a good, honest, in-depth debate on this nation. We cannot have an ongoing debate in a country as to

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whether we are going to have national unity or whether we are not.

There are jobless people across Canada today. They want jobs. The average people in this country want to put bread on their tables. They want to have the dignity of being full-fledged citizens participating in their society. They would much rather be paying taxes than receiving welfare payments. It is up to us in this Parliament and in every legislature in Canada to think of those people, to think of the further advancement of Canada, this nation that was put together by great people like George Etienne Cartier, Baldwin and Lafontaine, people who had the flexibility to meet the other person's mind, have discussion and eventually agree.

That is going to be the big issue in this Parliament. Are we Canadians going to sit around, continue to bicker and differ among ourselves on questions of national unity when if we got together and had a meeting of minds we would go on to retain and improve Canada as one of the greatest nations on the face of the earth? Some people in other parts of the world would give their back teeth to be here with us today.

We not only have a great obligation to Canadians to provide jobs, we have a great obligation in this country to create research and development, to go on with it, to think of people in various parts of this country. Transportation is very important to this nation. We have many issues before us today; a \$46 billion deficit in one year, a \$500 billion debt in this country.

I beg and plead with all members in this House to get down to the business that our ancestors would want us to do, and that is building Canada, which they strained their backs and expended their energies to do. They had a vision for Canada. Let us not lose that vision. Canada is one of the most loved nations on the face of the earth today. Other countries must be wondering what is going on here. If we are arguing among ourselves, they will wonder whether we are going to tear it apart or not. I have such a deep feeling for this nation that I could not help but lay my notes aside tonight and express these very sincere and in-depth feelings.

We have a nation here that is not fully developed. Some people talk as if we are a fully developed nation. Out there we can create jobs by promoting tourism in this country. Tourism in Canada is virtually untouched, virtually untapped. We have some of the greatest scenes in this nation. Remember this. We have had a tremendous group of statesmen in this House over the years since these Parliament Buildings were first designed in 1859 and the members here now are in some of those seats. I ask the members to think about developing the vision, the sincerity and the dedication to our nation of those people who passed through these seats ahead of us over the years.

(1930)

I have the list of Prime Ministers here. People think that Parliament is a raucous place today. Take out *Hansard* and read some of the debates on the great free trade of the 1911 election. Read the debates of the conscription issue in this House in 1917. It practically tore the country apart. It was a terrible thing on the social conscience of Canadians.

In the opposition lobby and in the government lobby of that day, I was told by an older person a few years ago, there was a bar and the debate went on all night long. Can you imagine what a spirited debate that was.

That is the kind of history we have here. We are not an old country. We are a very young country. It is not surprising that we should be having debates on national unity along the way. I just want to say this evening that we should think of the railway building which I mentioned and those people who immigrated to Canada and their train trips across this nation. After getting off ships some settled in Montreal. The St. Lawrence seaway development is one of the finest waterways that any continent could be blessed with. We can live together. You bet we can live together and we can thrive together.

If we put our energies into developing Canada and put a vision into this Parliament, exercise a vision to create jobs, we can make Canadians happy again right across this country. Canada is worth retaining. The world knows that. It seems to me that what we have to do is convince ourselves. We have some great talent in this country.

I have friends all across the province of Quebec. I have friends across Atlantic Canada. I have relatives in western Canada whom I have never seen, as many members may have. I have been to the territories in the north. This is the way we can build bridges. We must see our country and we must know our people. There must be respect for people out there. The only way that we can expect their respect is if we are not only seen to be but in fact are working on their behalf and on their betterment for the future.

There has to be respect for dignity, a respect for people of different cultures, yes, and a respect for some decency throughout the world. Hope and dignity should be the landmarks of this Parliament.

(1935)

I agree with the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell when he said a while ago: "People think everybody was fighting with one another in past Parliaments". Over my years here I have had many very good friends on both sides of the House. I remain in touch with some of them today.

The 205 new members in the House have one of the greatest opportunities going. It is a personal challenge. They too will make friends back and forth across the floor. They too will find

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that those people worked just as hard to get elected and have good ideas for Parliament and for Canada. They will grow to respect one another.

To every one sitting in the House now I say it is a great opportunity to be flexible, to develop friends and to establish a base for helping people across the country. There are people out there who are hurting. Let us remember that the three main industries from colonial days that built this nation of Canada were the fisheries, the forests and agriculture. All three of them are facing considerable trouble today and we must have a feeling for the people out there who are fighting to stay alive, to make a living and to be creative.

Over the years Canada has grown up a great deal. We have developed into a very responsible nation. I went to Dieppe on one of the anniversaries of the battle there and I could not believe what I saw. It was the first time I had seen it. There was a little narrow beach with tremendous cliffs that had openings in them all the way up for machine gun turrets and other heavy artillery. Poor Canadians were sent across the English Channel to attack Dieppe. One does not need any imagination at all to question the senior officer or officers who made that decision. Canada must have greater say in what we do with our Canadians abroad, whether it be in peacekeeping duties or, hopefully not, in time of war.

Ten of thousands of young people died in World War I. They did not have an opportunity to live in this country. They did not have an opportunity to sit in this Parliament. Within 21 years there was a second world war that took another cream of the crop of young people from this nation. They are resting in graves far from this nation. They fought for Canada. They fought for peace in the world. They fought for freedom. They wanted a free world. Today in their memory the least we can do is have some flexibility and real sound friendship right across the nation for which they fought and died, were wounded or came home with horrendous thoughts about what they had experienced.

These are some of my feelings today as I sit here and listen to the debate. I did not get into the contents of the throne speech which is a good start, an excellent start. I remember every word of it as do other members on the government side of the House and those on the other side. We had the red book and what we have in the throne speech is part of the red book. There will be more to come. As parliamentarians we must gain the respect of Canadians by doing what we said we were going to do. We cannot win them all. We are not going to come out of it batting 100 per cent, but with the fact that there is a target to aim at we are going to come out of it far better than if we did not map out our route in the first place.

(1940)

The very fact that each of us was elected to this House of Commons shows that we have some special qualities and appeal

to the people who sent us here. I ask the new members to develop a good rapport with all of us. My mind is open. My handshake goes out to anyone in this House who wants to discuss an issue whether or not I totally disagree.

Let us think of one thing. We want to get Canadians employed. We want to continue this great nation for which our forefathers fought so hard. They put up with much torment to build our nation of today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's remarks and I was rather moved. He spoke from the heart and I liked it; however, a country is not built only with a heart but also with reason. He talked about building bridges. He talked about a railroad from coast to coast. True enough, but the problem is that in my riding of Matapédia—Matane, railway travel is a problem. Last year, we had to apply tremendous pressure to try to improve the situation.

There was Meech Lake, and some people of good will who tried to build bridges. Five small conditions, five requests which Mr. Bourassa called a minimum, and rightly so. Indeed, this country is vast, huge, but we are two founding nations which do not feel at home from coast to coast.

You also talked about employment. My riding of Matapédia—Matane is among the poorest in Canada. Unemployment rates are astounding. I am going to ask you a question. You occasionally mentioned forestry and agriculture, but I did not see one line referring to natural resources, that is to say mines, energy, water and forestry. Could you explain why? If you want to build something and, above all, create jobs—

[*English*]

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's problem with transportation. It was rather ironic I was given a train pass on the day I was sworn in. I do not have access to a passenger train.

The hon. member mentioned the two founding peoples. He will also be aware, as I mentioned in my speech, that people in the early pioneer days worked together long before Confederation to bring together those two founding peoples. Confederation itself was based on protecting the language, religion and culture of Quebecers. Those were some of the main reasons for it.

(1945)

The hon. member mentioned high poverty rates. There are areas of Canada with high poverty rates. I have some in my own riding. I can relate to that.

We will create jobs. We will create the initiatives to produce jobs. We are not going to say we will not do something because it is not in the program. If it falls under jobs and is going to create jobs then we want it.

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The hon. member mentioned the throne speech and forests. As he knows the forestry industry comes under provincial jurisdiction. There are many members in our caucus who believe as firmly as I do that we should have federal forestry agreements as we have had in the past.

We have treated our forest resources very roughly and have not managed them well. One thing that must happen from here in is the planting of trees. We have some very good institutions that develop forest trees. The expertise is there and it is a way to produce jobs. We can get people to prepare our forests for the future. We need to take an overall look at our natural resources. We also need to deal with the provinces on many of them.

That is why in our red book during the election period, and every day the government will be sitting here, we put a great deal of emphasis on federal-provincial relations. It is going to be very important if we are to produce jobs for Canadians and to have a good rapport with governments of whatever stripe in whatever province so that we can work with them in protecting natural resources such as forestry, as the hon. member mentioned, and build a protection for agriculture, even though Canada was the only country at the GATT discussions that believed in supply management. It is the only one left of the 117.

We cannot very well sign an agreement with ourselves. Canada is the only one left that believes in it. The only way to go is with high tariffs to protect our supply management system. We attempted to do that. By and large a pretty good deal came out of it. Also the other sectors of the economy affected by the GATT agreement will be big pluses for the country.

I will certainly be glad any time to have a discussion with the hon. gentleman. I am sure we will find a common basis for friendship and serious discussion. I invite him to do that. We will learn to love this place after a while because we will know we are trying to do things for Canadians, that we are trying to do things for the people who sent us to Ottawa.

I have known people in years past whose greatest aim was to get on the front page of the newspaper and on television every night of the week, but they did not come back very often after the next election. They spent so much time promoting themselves that they forgot who sent them to Ottawa to work on their behalf.

I welcome the hon. gentleman in private conversation.

(1950)

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I listened to what the hon. gentleman had to say and I have to tell those in this House that I was moved by his nationalism and I was deeply moved by the way he sees his country, Canada. I must say that this part of the world is indeed a place where it is good to live and where there are many opportunities. Canada has always been a democratic country.

However, I think it is time now for Canadians all across the country to realize that we must go forward and that Quebecers must now have their own way.

As I said before, I agree with everything the gentleman said about our part of the world. Let us now think of the possibility of living side by side in harmony. I think that is possible. That is why I am now in this House with my colleagues from Quebec and other parts of Canada, to take a stand and make a decision for the future, perhaps the best decision for Canada and Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, in view of the time, may I get immediately unanimous consent from the House, as required by our Standing Orders, to speak a couple minutes after the time when the House usually adjourns?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the member for Roberval. Is there unanimous consent for him to go beyond the normal time limit for the sitting of the House?

[*English*]

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. In the spirit of the new Parliament—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Excuse me. I apologize for not appropriately recognizing the member. The hon. member for Regina—Lumsden, please.

Mr. Solomon: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the request for unanimous consent, in the spirit of co-operation in the new Parliament and on behalf of the New Democratic Party members, I would be pleased to provide consent from this part of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): There is unanimous consent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank all my colleagues for giving unanimous consent so that my first speech before the House will not be interrupted.

It is always extremely intimidating for a new member to speak for the first time before an assembly such as ours, which is a product of democracy. I shall be as brief as possible, in keeping with the spirit of our standing orders.

We are just out of an electoral campaign that took us to every corner of our ridings. I do not know a single member of this House, from one side or the other, who did not listen closely to his or her constituents during that period.

A period when—and that is one of the main virtues of democracy—the voters, our constituents were able to make themselves heard.

The Address

(1955)

People were able to express themselves, as is the case every three of four years; they were able to tell us about their concerns, their fears, their needs, as well as their concerns and their objectives.

I was really surprised to hear the people from the riding of Roberval, whom I knew well since I represented them twice in the Quebec National Assembly say how disappointed they were to see that, after nine years of a government whose mandate was coming to an end, the basic issues of the election campaign were essentially the same as those of the 1984 campaign. This was both surprising and disappointing for the people who listen to us, and it explains in part the lack of confidence and the lack of interest regarding politicians in our society.

People were disappointed because in the 1984 election campaign, the Progressive Conservative Party had pledged to eliminate or reduce the deficit. At that time, politicians travelled to every riding to ask their fellow Canadians to support them, and more importantly to promise them that the deficit would, from then on, be under control. I must point out here that this deficit was totally generated by the Liberal government.

Job creation was another priority during that election campaign, the 1984 campaign. Politicians of this country travelled everywhere to promise Canadians that the problem of unemployment would be solved, adding that it was unacceptable for a society such as ours to have an unemployment rate of about 20 per cent in several regions. This was a promise. What is the situation nine years later? The situation is the same. If anything, it is worse than before.

During the 1984 campaign, a commitment was also made whereby the constitutional problems would be solved, especially for Quebec where this is a very sensitive issue. We were told that a federalist party sitting in Ottawa would once and for all solve the constitutional problems and erase the unspeakable insult made to Quebec in 1982. Earlier this afternoon, the Leader of the Opposition alluded to this episode. Quebecers felt they have been betrayed by unspeakable political acts which took place in Canada in 1982, 1984, 1988, and up to the present.

After nine years of promises, nine years of hopes, the election campaign was dominated by the same themes. Our senders debt not only has not been contained, it has tripled, in spite of all promises; the rate of unemployment is at least as high as it was in 1984, or nine years later, in spite of all promises. And last, but not least, there is a constitutional saga that deserves closer scrutiny. Years of discussions, exchanges, a deal, the Meech Lake Agreement, an agreement that essentially could have satisfied a certain number of Quebecers. For the main part, the Meech Lake Accord contained conditions which seemed acceptable to a relatively large segment of the population of Quebec. But what happened? Meech Lake was rejected. Several months, several years of discussions, compromises, exchanges, fragile

agreements were rejected, as we have seen, even if they gave some hope for the future of Canada.

(2000)

Some of our colleagues on the other side, whose ideas I respect, of course, will say that Canada is a great country, a country where we should enjoy living, where we should feel comfortable. But whatever people might say, let us not forget that, in 1982, this country let us down, and this country rejected Meech Lake which represented a giant step on the constitutional scene.

Now we come to another discussion, another compromise, the Charlottetown Agreement, the substance of which seemed unacceptable even to Quebecers. Quebecers said no to this Agreement because it did not take into account their basic traditional demands, while English Canada rejected it because it apparently made too many concessions to Quebec.

It is very sad indeed to look at how political negotiations unfolded under the previous government. Our political formation was born of the desire of Quebecers to express themselves through the democratic process, to elect to the Canadian Parliament men and women who would convey the message that had been circulating at home for years and which deserved to be expressed here, to be shared during debates like this one, to be the core of our exchanges and discussions and, maybe, eventually, of our mutual understanding.

The Bloc Québécois has received extraordinary support from a majority of Quebecers. We are 54 here today, 54 members of Parliament who have a job to do, who have the mission to see to it that this message is, for once, given to the federal Parliament without being filtered or distorted on the way by those who refuse to say it as it is felt back home.

We are here to make Parliament work. I want to reassure my colleagues. Many things have been said about the arrival of the Bloc in Ottawa. Never during the election campaign did we mention that we intended to paralyse Parliament, to prevent it from doing its job, to prevent it from dealing with the real problems facing Canadians. After our first day here, my colleagues and I are happy to show our interest for this institution and our profound respect for democracy. We are happy to tell all those who were worried about our coming here that we will co-operate. We will help find solutions to the terrible problems facing our society.

The whole political context that brought us here is set against a dreadful economic background. The government implemented a monetary policy that created unemployment, a monetary policy that was aimed essentially at maintaining a low inflation rate in Canada without paying any attention to the unemployment it brought. The economic crisis was made even worse by the signing of a free trade agreement, when industry had not been prepared for the deep changes so badly needed in the context of a broader economy. The free trade agreement was

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indeed something positive for our future and for the development of our trade relations.

(2005)

Unfortunately, the difficulties of transition had been overlooked. It did not cross the government's mind that companies needed help to face this new context. The monetary policy and the lack of preparation for a new international trade context combined to make the situation even more painful for Canadians than it was in 1984.

It is now incumbent upon this Parliament to settle once and for all a number of problems that get worse and worse all the time.

Why are we here? First, we heard the throne speech, the contents of which we are now discussing. The first topic is a Parliamentary reform that could eventually lead to more responsibilities for members. This is certainly commendable. That approach could prove interesting. We should wait and see what this reform is all about.

On the other hand, at the same time, you want to enhance the role of members of this House, yet you refuse to create an all-party nonpartisan parliamentary committee to analyze, examine, study, and criticize each spending item of the government. Instead, you merely mention a few examples of benefits which could be discarded so that we can appease our consciences and try to convince Canadians that we have done what had to be done.

So, a parliamentary reform that is already somewhat handicapped, I would say, by the fact that the first valid exercise to which we could have invited the members of this House is being dismissed by this government, a Speech from the Throne in which this government did not see fit to reassure the citizens of this country about the kind of changes that it was ready to make in the social programs.

It is disturbing to note that, at times, signals are given by politicians whose decisions are important in these matters and, at other times, in statements by employers, by people involved in the economic development, by people who are looking for solutions to the budget problems of the government, but who can only identify social programs as the primary target.

Imagine the wonderful country and the brave government that will solve the debt problem of this country on the backs of those who suffer the most! Are they going to hit the elderly, or the unemployed once again? Are they going to hit people on welfare or health programs? We do not know.

At times, the messages are informal, at other times, they are more formal in articles that they hasten to deny the next day. At any rate, when I hear the minister of Canadian Intergovernmental Affairs, right at the beginning of this mandate, say to us that they should at least try and cut 20 per cent in health care programs, I am concerned. It is nothing at all! Twenty per cent! As if it were the problem to tackle first.

(2010)

We are sometimes told that we should make the system more effective. Naturally, everybody wants to make this system more effective. But no one ever talked about maintaining or protecting the financial resources allocated to these programs. What worries us is that each time issues such as the debt and the current year deficit of over \$40 billion are raised, each time that these issues are raised, the social programs are inevitably associated with the repayment of the debt, with the reduction of the deficit. There is always someone somewhere to suggest that the money is to be found in the social programs.

Administrative duplications in this country are very expensive. Hundreds of millions of dollars are wasted in jurisdictional disputes between the various levels of government. Today, we have asked—I personally did—the member opposite if he would make it a priority to address the issue of manpower. All Quebecers agree with that. Someone is whispering to me that he said he would. Of course, he said he would. He always says yes, but sometimes it is “yes, right away”, and some other times it is “yes, probably”. It could be “yes, certainly”, “yes, probably”, or “yes, sometime in the future”.

The problem is that it is stop and go in an area where the Minister could make history. All he would have to do is endorse the consensus among the people involved in Quebec. Seldom have we seen the unions, the industry, the federalist liberal government of Quebec, the people responsible for manpower training, the unemployed, the hundreds of thousands of unemployed in Quebec, all in agreement. But they are, and what they are asking the federal government, before it cuts into social programs, is to save the \$250 million wasted on duplicate services which only create problems.

I thought that the government would leap at a tremendous opportunity like this one. But the Minister for Intergovernmental affairs is not sure. Maybe yes, maybe no. It makes no sense. The government will have to face reality some day. You are indicating that my time is up, Mr. Speaker, so I will conclude. The government must face reality, it must listen to members of this assembly, it must seize the opportunities available to save money without taking away from those most in need.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague from the other side and I take this opportunity to congratulate him on being elected

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to Parliament. I had the privilege of meeting him at conferences when we were both members of provincial legislatures; I do not recall whether it was at the International Assembly of French-Speaking Parliamentarians or at other forums. In any case, I am glad to see him here.

I would like to ask him a question which is rather relevant, I think. A few minutes ago, he said in his remarks that the minister responsible for federal-provincial issues had said yes in more ways than one, I won't repeat them all, to initiatives aimed at avoiding duplication. According to the member, we have heard it only too often and things have been dragging on for far too long since the Liberals came to power.

(2015)

Did the member forget that today is the first one of the session and that there was only one answer and that it was yes? If the member is not satisfied with a positive answer, can we conclude that he would have preferred a negative one that would have boosted his position and allowed him to say that the federal government is unwilling to do anything for them, thereby pointing out the failure of federalism? In other words he is saying to us that a yes is not enough, that things have been going on for too long. The first day in Parliament, we said yes right away, but even that took too long. Maybe we should have said yes before the question was asked? Perhaps that is the solution.

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, to whom I give my regards, for asking for clarifications. We have indeed met previously in another forum.

There is something we have to understand, and I am happy that my colleague has asked that question because it might help other ministers than the minister responsible for federal-provincial matters. This government has had a problem since the election and I am glad to be able to tell you how that is seen from the outside. The government gives the impression that no one in its ranks is able to take a firm stand. One day they create a program, for instance the infrastructure program. The government announces an infrastructure program, which is interesting enough. They tell us that there may be negotiations, that there might be developments and that they will give details later on these aspects; that they will make the criteria known and that provincial governments will be asked to contribute. The problem is there is never anything clear.

Regarding duplication, the minister I asked omitted to explain today a declaration he made yesterday, although a few months ago he had clearly and firmly announced his intention of dealing with the question of duplication of responsibilities with Quebec. Only a few hours ago the same minister declared that the

question of labour agreements has now become less urgent. The minister said he prefers to wait and examine those questions in the light of the general review of social programs that has to be done. That could take up to two years.

Then I tried, unsuccessfully, to find out if the minister would proceed rapidly. For each minute that passes we lose millions of dollars. What we want is determination and clear and precise answers. People watching us are fed up with half-measures. They want real measures. That is why I was not happy with the answer. I would have liked some reassurance from the minister. I would have liked to hear a determined minister saying: "Yes, I am glad to announce that every effort is now made to settle the issue of overlapping jurisdictions and duplication regarding employment, because every Quebecer wants us to do so". Just ask the new premier of Quebec—a liberal and federalist premier. He will tell you how dissatisfied and disappointed he is about the way this government is dealing with the matter. That is the problem.

I told the minister today what we want from the government: "Just make a decision! Choose an option! Yes or no, will you make changes in the social programs? Just say so! Yes or no, will you cut the transfers to the provinces? We want an answer". That is what people want to know. They do not want to hear, according to circumstances, yes or no, a little bit or a lot, not much and not too much. Make a decision, that is what matters to us.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Colleagues, I want to take a moment on this, my first occasion as one of your associate Speakers, to thank my constituents of Stormont—Dundas for returning me here to the House of Commons.

[Translation]

I want to thank my constituents of Stormont—Dundas for their trust and I undertake to do my utmost in their service.

[English]

An inspiration to me in my new functions here in Parliament in the chair will be a former member for Stormont—Dundas, the Hon. Lucien Lamoureux, who was the Speaker of this House for several years.

[Translation]

I congratulate you all and wish you success in this Parliament.

[English]

I congratulate all of you on your election to this 35th Parliament.

The Address

Finally, to all of you, my peers, I pledge my full co-operation. [English]

[Translation]

It being 8.20 p.m. this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

To you, my peers, I pledge my full co-operation. Thank you. (The House adjourned at 8.20 p.m.)

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