



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 135 • NUMBER 003 • 1st SESSION • 36th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 24, 1997

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

The House of Commons Debates are also available on the
Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 24, 1997

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing *O Canada*, and we will be led by the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

[*Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

MONITOR JET TRAINER AIRCRAFT

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite all members of Parliament to join me this evening at the National Aviation Museum for the unveiling of the Monitor jet trainer aircraft. This state of the art jet will be manufactured in North Bay, Ontario, in my riding of Nipissing, by the Canadian Aerospace Group in partnership with Sikorsky Aircraft, creating 140 jobs.

I am very proud of this success story which will see a surplus defence department hangar utilized to build the first Canadian made military jet in over two decades. The hard work of the Air Base Property Corporation using Industry Canada and National Defence adjustment funds has paid off. Their partnership with Canadian Aerospace and Sikorsky will develop a new aerospace industry in North Bay.

I ask all members of the House to join me this evening at the Rockcliffe airport from 6 to 8 to view the future of military aviation manufacturing in Canada. Experts from the Canadian Aerospace Group and Sikorsky will be on hand to explain this unique project. I look forward to seeing all members there this evening.

CHINESE CANADIANS

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak in the House for the first time. More than 700,000 people of Chinese ancestry live in Canada today, but that was not always so.

In 1902 a royal commission decided that Asians were “unfit for full citizenship—obnoxious to a free community and dangerous to the state”.

In 1923 Mackenzie King's Liberal government passed the exclusion act which suspended Chinese immigration. Canadian Chinese call July 1, 1923, the day the exclusion act came into effect, humiliation day.

In 1947 the exclusion act was repealed and Canadians of Chinese ancestry won their right to be reunited with their families. I would not be standing here today if that act had not been repealed.

1997 marks the 50th anniversary of the repeal. Justice will be served only if Canada has learned a lesson from this bleak moment in history.

* * *

WHITBY WARRIORS

Ms. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Ajax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding achievement of the Whitby Warriors Junior A Lacrosse Club. This past August the Whitby Warriors won the Minto Cup as the best Junior A lacrosse team in Canada.

In spite of losing the first two games to the Burnaby Lakers they persevered and came back to win their next four games to take the best seven championship round in six games.

The Warriors were led by their top scorers Paul Sallie, Pat Jones and Gavin Prout and backed up by the most valuable player awarded winning performance of goal tender Mike Wye.

The Whitby Warriors are coached by Jim Bishop whose involvement in the sport of lacrosse spans some 51 years. Whitby's win was Mr. Bishop's eighth Minto Cup, coming 28 years after coaching the legendary Oshawa Green Gaels to seven consecutive Minto Cup championships. The determination and sportsmanship of the Whitby Warriors are an inspiration to us all.

S. O. 31

I know all members will join with me in honouring the Whitby Warriors as the Junior A champions in Canada's national summer sport.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1989, the Department of National Defence was ordered by the Canadian Human Rights Commission to enrol more women in the next ten years. At the time, only 9.9 per cent of the members of our armed forces were women.

• (1405)

Today, eight years later, their numbers have remained virtually the same, with women accounting for a mere 10.7 per cent of the Canadian Armed Forces.

We note today that the Department of National Defence has not done a thing to recruit women. But now they would have us believe they are complying with the Human Rights Tribunal order by launching a recruiting campaign aimed exclusively at women and known as "Operation Minerva".

DND knows very well it is impossible to integrate women fully by 1999. All I have to say to that is: too little too late.

* * *

[English]

PLASTIMET

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise, on this first full sitting day of the 36th Parliament, to reiterate my call to the Ontario government for an independent public inquiry into the July Plastimet fire in Hamilton.

Conservative Premier Mike Harris and his environment and health ministers have backtracked, flip-flopped on their pledges for an inquiry, citing the pathetic excuse of the need for evidence of wrongdoing.

Is it right that the local MPP had to awaken the provincial environment minister at 3 a.m. before the premier would dispatch air monitoring equipment to the toxic fire site? Why did the province first refuse and then later accept federal government assistance?

There are questions of compliance with the Ontario fire code, inventory lists, security, and locating a recycling plant near a hospital, schools and a high density residential area.

Frustrated with the Harris government smokescreen, my constituents demand an independent public inquiry to clear the smoke and

to produce recommendations which might prevent an environmental tragedy like the Plastimet fire from ever happening again.

* * *

WAR CRIMINALS

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House on a very important matter to my constituents of Thornhill, and I believe all Canadians, and that is the prosecution of war criminals.

The people of Thornhill, especially the Jewish community, believe that Canada must be vigilant in prosecuting war criminals. Canada has a moral obligation to deport those who have been found guilty of committing crimes against humanity. We must not be seen as a haven for Nazi war criminals and others who have committed war crimes.

My constituents are aware of the commitment by the Liberal government to move on denaturalization and on deportation of those convicted of war crimes.

Finally Canada is taking action. Canada is doing more now to track Nazi war criminals than almost any country in the world. Since 1995 many deportation cases have been initiated and I am confident we will continue to pursue war criminals to the fullest extent of the law.

While this issue is of special importance to the Jewish—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

* * *

MOTHER TERESA

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today so that the House and its members might pay tribute to the life and memory of Mother Teresa.

It was with great sadness that Canadians learned of her recent death. This godly and gracious woman was a beacon of hope to the sick and the poor living in the streets of Calcutta and whose suffering she tried to ease and deeply felt.

Her message to humanity was simple: yes, there is someone who cares. It is a message that in our world will continue to resonate loudly and will no doubt serve as her lasting legacy.

With the passing of Mother Teresa the world will indeed be a colder place because the beacon of goodness, though not extinguished, burns a little less brightly today.

I am sure all Canadians join me in being thankful for her life. I ask for all members to observe a time of silence in their own thoughts and pay tribute to the remarkable legacy of caring and giving that was Mother Teresa.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Gary Pillitteri (Niagara Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year the International Whirlpool Bridge that links Canada and the U.S. celebrated its 100th anniversary.

This important celebration reinforced the co-operation existing between our two great countries. It is therefore difficult to believe that a new American immigration law will soon require that all Canadian travellers entering and exiting the United States complete a visa information card.

• (1410)

The community I represent is very concerned that this will cause endless hours of traffic jams and may damage the tourist and trade links we have established over a period of many years of co-operation.

It is then my sincere hope the proposed amendments exempting Canadians travelling to the U.S. each year are passed as soon as possible.

In the meantime I ask our government to keep pressure on our friends south of the border to implement the amendments so that this controversial law will not cause havoc in border communities across Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

ALGERIA

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, five months after condemning in this House the civil war in Algeria, the Canadian government has yet to call upon the international community to find a peaceful solution.

This silence has made it possible for the tragic events that took place in Benthala, Algeria, over Monday night, to occur. The majority of the 200 people killed in this massacre were women and children.

In view of the increase in acts of terrorism and senseless violence in Algeria that have left more than 60,000 victims in recent years, according to Amnesty International estimates, Quebec, Canada and the international community must echo the voices of the bereaved families by utterly condemning the use of violence and seeking a political solution to the Algerian crisis.

* * *

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Ms. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a black Canadian from Quebec, of aboriginal and French descent, I am very proud to represent the riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine in the 36th Parliament of Canada.

S. O. 31

The Speech from the Throne delivered yesterday is, in my opinion, a speech on national unity.

[English]

I wish to advise the House, and in particular the Hon. Stéphane Dion, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs—

[Translation]

The Speaker: My dear colleague, you must not refer to hon. members by name, but by riding.

You have a few more seconds.

[English]

Ms. Marlene Jennings: I wish to advise the House that my constituents are delighted with the initiatives of the government with respect to the Canadian unity file.

I want to assure the House that I intend to continue to contribute and encourage my constituents to actively support these very welcome and timely initiatives.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN ECONOMY

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt that the Canadian economy is back on track.

The cost of living is going up very slowly, while retail trade is stronger than it has been in years. Statistics Canada announced that, between July and August, the consumer price index increased by 0.19 per cent, the same level as for the two previous months.

Between August 1996 and August 1997, Canadian consumers have faced an average increase of 1.8 per cent in the cost of living, which is pretty low.

All this is good news for Canadians.

* * *

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has decided to give public service executives bonuses totalling some \$12.2 million, when close to \$2 billion is owed to the 80,000 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and when many Canadian families continue to live in poverty and unemployment.

The government is not in compliance with its own pay equity legislation. While public service executives are getting significant bonuses, many clerks, secretaries and other employees are still not being paid the retroactive payments owed to them.

I hope the Treasury Board will pay what is owed to these employees and thus fulfill its commitment to female members of the public service and to women in general.

S. O. 31

In order to correct this injustice, we are also asking that a new budget be tabled as early as this fall.

[English]

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

PRINCESS DIANA

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, death stalks all of us and can be cruel, but never more so than when it takes the life of the young.

On August 31 the world lost a beautiful soul in the death of Princess Diana. And we all grieved. We grieved not only for the loss of someone filled with so much promise, but also for someone in whom we saw ourselves.

She set an example in how to overcome our difficulties. She taught us to reach inside ourselves to become something greater than what we are by helping those who are less fortunate. Diana championed the plight of sick children, AIDS patients, the terminally ill. Recently she brought to the front of the world stage the horrors of landmines and their tragic victims.

As Canadians, we extend our deepest sympathies and prayers to the family of the Princess and especially to her sons, Princes William and Harry.

* * *

[Translation]

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À CHICOUTIMI

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday I had the pleasure of announcing on behalf of the Government of Canada the investment of \$750,000 over five years, via the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council, in a new industrial engineering chair at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi.

The professor currently holding that chair, Masoud Farzaneh, will study the impact of freezing rain on power transmission network equipment. Two industrial partners, Hydro-Quebec and Alcan, have also contributed to the funding of this chair.

Creation of this chair is evidence of the Liberal government's desire to work in conjunction with our partners in industry, the universities and provincial agencies to develop new knowledge which will improve electrical service and eliminate power outages caused by precipitation freezing on transmission lines.

This is further evidence that Canada is working to ensure the success of all Quebecers.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's throne speech gives Canadians every reason to be worried about their future retirement plans.

Older Canadians have earned the right to a secure retirement. Middle class workers cannot afford to pay more for the same benefits. Younger Canadians want the CPP to be there when they need it.

The Liberals plan to fix the CPP will be a further \$11 billion tax hike on working Canadians and employers if the government refuses to reduce the EI premiums.

This government has a hidden agenda with the proposed seniors' benefit. It hurts middle income Canadians the most. It disproportionately attacks women by basing it on family income and it discourages people to save for their retirement.

I ask the government to stop punishing Canadians who have worked and saved for their retirement and urge them to put the seniors benefit on hold until there are full consultations on the proposed plan.

* * *

MOTHER TERESA

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the world lost the moral beacon of the 20th century. Nobel Peace Prize winner Mother Teresa led a life that challenged the modern world by teaching us that lifestyle is not more important than life.

She accumulated no material possessions, shunned political power and never succumbed to moral compromises. Her life was consumed by the simple goal of providing food, education, medical care, love and hope to the sick and desolate.

Her notion of charity was not to hold black tie fundraisers and send others to do the messy work. No, Mother Teresa's example was to pick the maggots out of people's open wounds herself.

No human has done so much, for so many, for so little. But her life's work, not even respect for the dead, could spare her from those who want to protect their world from her message. Fully half of the media's coverage of Mother Teresa's death was devoted to criticism of her life and beliefs.

There are obviously many maggot infested wounds that still need to be cleansed by the millions she inspired. She will be remembered simply and affectionately as Mother.

Oral Questions

• (1420)

The Speaker: Before starting question period I want to share with you some of the intentions developed with the House leaders in consultation with me.

I know that this is the first day and I will give us all a bit of leeway. However, I would like to ask you to consider joining with me in the days and weeks ahead in the following manner.

It would be my intention to shorten the length of time for both the questions and the answers from what we had in the last Parliament so that, on average, we can have more questions. This will mean that the advance statements by the questioners will be shorter. I would also ask for the help of the ministers to keep their responses shorter.

[Translation]

So now we shall see how things go today.

[English]

We will keep track of the time.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be back in the House, and I am not just talking about Stornoway.

In his election platform the Prime Minister promised Canadians a 50:50 split between increased spending on one hand and debt and tax reduction on the other. Yet in yesterday's speech from the throne his government listed at least 29 new spending measures, but not one single practical measure for either debt reduction or tax relief.

Was this simply an oversight? Did he just leave something out of the speech or does this signal a return to Liberal chequebook spending?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the new Leader of the Opposition in this House. We have made a commitment that very soon the country will be in a position to operate with a surplus.

The budget is scheduled for the month of February. We have the time but first we have to go to a zero deficit.

We had to reduce the disastrous deficit of \$42 billion left by the Conservative Party. Every year we are obliged to spend some money on some programs because of the problems in society which need to be taken care of.

It is always the Liberal approach to care and be responsible to others.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I find it inconceivable that the Department of Finance would truly endorse a return to spending as the number one fiscal priority of the government.

Economists inside and outside the department have been saying for years that the federal government cannot spend its way to lower unemployment and that irresponsible spending and taxation is what is keeping unemployment high.

Has the Prime Minister simply forgotten about the seriousness of the debt or the high tax levels, or is he telling the House that higher spending is the number one fiscal priority of his government?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Obligated by your dictum, Mr. Speaker, the answer is no.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there are 29 proposals in the throne speech for higher spending and nothing on debt reduction or tax reduction.

If the government makes higher spending its number one priority, there will be no surpluses. Therefore 50 per cent of zero is zero, and there is zero for tax relief or debt reduction.

• (1425)

Is not this 50:50 formula simply a shell game, like the GST promise in the previous election, to allow the government to do what it really wants to do, which is to return to excessive spending?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the Leader of the Opposition does not have anything very concrete on which to attack the government. He is setting a target to shoot at. We said very clearly we will spend more money when we are in a surplus position.

When we were elected we said we would reduce the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP. It now looks as if within the first four years of our administration we have managed to reduce it to zero, or very close to zero. At the same time there are problems in society that have to be fixed and we will do it in a responsible way.

Around the world today people look to Canada because we are an example of a fiscally responsible government and, at the same time, a government caring for those who need the most help in our society.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in February the Minister of Finance said a 5 per cent jobless rate was not only achievable but desirable. However, according to his department this is hogwash. It is forecasting 9 per cent, 8 per cent next year and 7 per cent until the year 2015.

Oral Questions

Can the minister explain why he is publicly talking about a 5 per cent unemployment rate when privately his department says the opposite? Who is right and who is wrong?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is wrong.

The debate to which the hon. member refers is a discussion over the natural rate of unemployment, the rate at which inflation would take off, and there is, in fact, a difference of opinion.

This government clearly states that an arbitrary number, like 8 per cent for a NAIRU, is not applicable to a country whose productivity is improving, a country where interest rates are low, a country whose industry has become lean and competitive.

All I can tell the hon. member is that Alan Greenspan agrees with me and I will take him over the member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in Canada several economists say that the long term natural rate for unemployment is well over the 5 per cent that the minister is talking about. Under this government my 13 year old son will be middle aged before we get within shouting distance of that 5 per cent target.

When is the minister going to take the advice of the real job creators and cut taxes? Canadians want tax cuts. I would like an answer from the prime minister-in-waiting, please.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it does the member good to be in the official opposition. For the first time he understands the real political truths in this country.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Paul Martin: No, not about me, but that they will never make it.

Let me give a couple of numbers. In the last four years under this Prime Minister the Canadian public has created over 970,000 new jobs. This year under this Prime Minister the Canadian public has created over 260,000 new jobs, the vast majority of those in the private sector. Under this Prime Minister the youth unemployment rate has started to go down. Under this Prime Minister the—

Some hon. members: More, more.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Governor General read a speech from the Throne that contained a number of particularly moving, even

lyrical, passages on Canada in the 21st century. The reality of the matter, however, is quite something else.

Will the Prime Minister not acknowledge that the Speech from the Throne sanctions his vision of Canada, where all major decisions will be made in Ottawa, with the provinces being relegated to the position of subsidiaries of Ottawa, and where Quebecers as a people have no place?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made frequent reference in the Speech from the Throne to the partnership we want with the provinces. We made frequent reference in the Speech from the Throne to what we intend to do for the children of poor families in Canada.

I would like to make it clear to the former Leader of the Opposition that, at the first ministers' meeting in June last year, all the provincial governments and premiers in attendance, including the Premier of Quebec, agreed to our establishing a child credit program to help poor families. This shows that we can work together within Canada as partners.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister uses the term "partners" because he thinks it is a popular term and would give it the same meaning it was given by the sovereignists. However, we have no illusions about this, because when the Prime Minister talks about partnership, it is the kind of partnership in which the political decisions are made in Ottawa and the provinces are asked to carry them out. The provinces are being treated like so many municipalities.

Would the Prime Minister agree that the throne speech has demonstrated, more clearly than ever before, that there are two diametrically opposed visions of Canada: one in Quebec where, since Jean Lesage, people have wanted to be "maîtres chez nous" and one in the rest of Canada, the one in the Calgary declaration where Quebecers are just as unique as Pacific salmon?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party overlooks the fact that we have worked very hard with the provinces since we came to power.

Take, for instance, Quebec's traditional demands regarding manpower training. We have entered into an agreement with the provincial governments, including the Government of Quebec.

For many years, the Government of Quebec and the other governments complained that we were involved in areas they would rather see us out of. That is why we withdrew from forestry, mining, tourism, social housing and manpower training. We have adjusted many programs. Of course, there is no way we can accommodate someone who wants separation.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister wanted, he said,

Oral Questions

to launch an appeal to citizens to work together to save Canada, except that nothing about the speech is likely to please Quebec.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Will he confirm that his party has buried the concept of distinct society once and for all and replaced it with the concept of “unique character”?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to the member for Roberval that he voted against distinct society here in this House.

I also want to point out to the member for Roberval that, when he was an MNA, he voted against the Meech Lake accord in the National Assembly.

We now have terms that are acceptable both to Quebecers and to all Canadians. What the premiers wanted to do was to show Quebecers that it is possible to be a francophone, to retain one's French culture, to live in Quebec, to be very proud of what sets one apart, and to be perfectly at ease within Canada. And I am very pleased with the premiers' attitude in this regard.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in exchanging niceties with the Prime Minister, might I remind him that he was the one who was traipsing all over Quebec during the last election campaign promising Quebecers that he would sell the rest of Canada on the idea of a distinct society, not I.

• (1435)

Is the Prime Minister now telling us that once again he is going to change his story and not fulfil the commitment he made to the voters of Quebec?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always stressed the necessity of recognizing the distinct character of Quebec because of its language, its culture, and its Civil Code.

The formula the premiers saw fit to accept a few weeks ago is a new one which describes the Quebec reality, something we continue to fight for, while the Bloc Québécois, in the House of Commons, and the Parti Québécois, in the National Assembly, have voted against anything which could accommodate Quebec so as to enable it to prosper within Canada.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have waited a long time for this moment. My question is to the Prime Minister.

On behalf of 1.4 million unemployed Canadians, will the government commit today to set clear timetables and targets for the reduction of unemployment? The government has done it with respect to deficit reduction. When will the government do the same

for unemployment and show that it is serious about putting Canadians back to work?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to welcome the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party to the House of Commons. I am happy to have her here. I know she has waited a long time and I hope she will stay for a long time too.

I would like to say that we want to reduce unemployment and we are working very hard on it. In fact during the last 46 months the Canadian economy has created 975,000 new jobs. The level of unemployment went down from 11.5 per cent to 9 per cent but we have to keep working.

The first thing we had to do was to put the finances of the nation in order. A few years ago we had a deficit of \$42 billion and very soon we will have reduced it to zero. We have to do that in order to create jobs. When there is no inflation, low interest rates and a competitive dollar, we can produce and be very competitive. It is in that way that we will create the jobs.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that 155 Liberal cheerleaders over there are pretty pleased with their record.

Since the last Liberal throne speech promised to tackle youth unemployment, 26,000 more young people in this country have not been able to find jobs and they are not cheering.

My question. Will the government commit today to set targets and timetables to reduce unemployment? If not, will it admit that it has simply given up doing anything to help the young people who most desperately need its help?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have tried to explain in a few words that we must have the basic elements to create jobs in the country. It is not by spending money that we will cure the problems of the nation. We have to do it in a responsible way and we have to put the books of the nation in order.

• (1440)

I would like to quote some advice I read on February 10 of this year. It was said that we have come too far and have worked too hard to restart the cycle of careless spending. Therefore, we will not follow the advice of the leader of the New Democratic Party. We will follow the advice of Mr. Roy Romanow who spoke in front of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It has to do with his government's shameful abuse of the unemployment insurance system.

His government said in the Speech from the Throne that it cares about unemployment in general and about youth unemployment in

Oral Questions

particular. The government could take concrete action immediately by reducing employment insurance premiums.

This is what the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, as well as Quebec's Chamber of Commerce and Conseil du patronat, are asking for.

What is this government waiting for to end this abuse and put people back to work?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I wish to welcome the Conservative Party leader, who is now back in the front row. We are happy to see him and look forward to be closer to him and to see him more often than in the last Parliament.

The Conservative Party leader should know that, when we came to office, the unemployment insurance fund showed an enormous deficit, because the Conservative government had not exercised prudence. The Conservatives had to increase premiums from \$2 to \$3.30, at a time when unemployment was on the rise in Canada.

These premiums were to go up to \$3.30 on January 1, 1994 under the legislation passed by his party's government. We reduced them to \$2.90, and will lower them again to \$2.80 on January 1, 1998. We are reducing premiums gradually, but we must do so responsibly, because we still have work to do to clean up the fiscal mess we inherited in 1993 from the Conservative Party leader's government.

[*English*]

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Prime Minister for his kind words in welcoming me back to the House. I would caution him against wishing that I be here too often and remind him of the old Chinese proverb that he may end up getting what he wishes for.

Today I want to offer the Prime Minister a great opportunity, an opportunity to do something for unemployed Canadians and young unemployed Canadians. If he acts today he can put thousands of people back to work in the next few weeks by reducing employment insurance premiums, this tax, this rip-off on Canadians to the tune of billions of dollars.

To be clear, I want to ask the Prime Minister one simple, straightforward question. Does he and his government believe that this employment insurance system should be used for the purpose of reducing the deficit, yes or no?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did not want to run the affairs of the nation the way that the previous government did. It never had any surplus in the unemployment insurance fund. When Canada was in a deep depression in 1991, a time when there were more and more unemployed in

Canada, the Tories took the insurance premium from \$2 and moved it up to \$3.30. That is not the way we want to do it.

We want to act as prudent managers in order to make sure that our financial situation is good in Canada and that we have low interest rates. We have that now and that is what is creating the 4 per cent growth that we will have this year in Canada. We are the leaders of the G-7 countries in this.

* * *

THRONE SPEECH

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the equality of citizens and provinces became a huge factor and played a large part in the Calgary premiers conference last week. In fact their framework for discussion listed the word equality five times. Yet yesterday in the throne speech we did not hear the word equality even once; uniqueness, diversity, all kinds of words, but not equality.

● (1445)

My question for the Prime Minister is in yesterday's throne speech why in the world was the equality of citizens and provinces deliberately left out?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we said we want to work in partnership and in collaboration with the provinces it is because we believe in equality. That is exactly the purpose of it.

About the equality of individuals, I do not have any lessons to receive from the hon. member for Edmonton North because I was the minister of justice who gave the charter of rights to all citizens of Canada to make them equal.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the concept of equality and the word equality is what is important. Speaking of justice ministers, it is a wonder that this justice minister did not notice the absence of the word equality and insist that it be put in the throne speech.

It is very strange that the government would mention the unique character of Quebec society and the diversity inherent in the federation and yet not mention equality.

If it is important to him, let me ask the prime minister this question one more time. Why does the prime minister not believe in the inherent equality of all provinces and all citizens, and why was it not in the throne speech?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is something I have talked about and lived by for the last 34 years that I have been a member of Parliament. I do not have to repeat the obvious every day, but if the hon. member is not reassured, I am for the equality of citizens and I am for the equality of the people of Canada. I have been for that all the time I have

Oral Questions

been in Canada, but equality does not mean that diversity cannot exist. This is very important.

Equality means that we recognize the people for what they are. In a family equality means that sometimes we have to have solutions that are meeting the needs in one part of Canada but which are not needed elsewhere.

We have, for example, despite equality a terrible problem of poverty in Canada. This means that those who are rich have to help those who are poor. It is what we believe in. The type of equality where we do not care about the poor like the Reform Party—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

In the throne speech we heard that the federal government, as its financial position improves, intends to intervene increasingly in areas of provincial jurisdiction, including health and education.

How can the Prime Minister justify increasing involvement by its government in health and education, considering that these areas have always been the responsibility of provincial governments?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada happens to be one of the most decentralized federations in the world, and together we have built a federation that has provided us with the best quality of life of any country. And we managed to do this because both levels of government, federal and provincial, are learning to work together and to concentrate on the areas for which they are responsible.

In the health sector, the federal government's responsibilities are those that are recognized in the Constitution. There is nothing unconstitutional about having five moral principles that are accepted throughout Canada, including Quebec, and as a result can be applied anywhere in Canada, both in the wealthiest and the less wealthy provinces.

I may remind the hon. member that the province that benefits the most per capita from the Canada Social Transfer happens to be Quebec.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time a federal government has so clearly indicated its intention of interfering in areas of provincial jurisdiction, especially education.

Would the Prime Minister or his minister agree that his program to measure the readiness of children to learn is, in fact, a foot in the door of the education sector, with all the consequences that involves: federal programs, federal assessment criteria, federal

employees, and on top of that, taxpayers who will again pay twice as a result of this latest duplication?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always amazed by the excessive reactions we get from that side of the House. However, if they get their kicks by measuring the orthodoxy of every word, by all means, let them make a study of semantics.

• (1450)

What we promised in the throne speech yesterday was to let Canadians benefit from a study by Statistics Canada, for which my department is responsible. I am referring to a national longitudinal survey we have been doing for several years. Since we invest enormous amounts of money in the well-being of our children, we feel it is very important to measure their progress, so that when they go to school, they are in the best possible position to learn.

* * *

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, except for Premier Bouchard, who did not attend the Calgary conference, all of Canada's provincial premiers agreed to put the question on national unity to the Canadian people.

Does the Prime Minister think it is acceptable for Quebecers to be the only Canadians who will not be consulted on national unity?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. Right now, the provincial governments have made a joint decision to consult the people before adopting resolutions in their respective legislatures.

In the case of Quebec, the present government of Quebec is not interested in consulting Quebecers on their genuine participation within Canada. Right now, the provinces have decided to consult their citizens before adopting their resolution. As soon as Quebec wants to adopt its resolution, I would ask the Government of Quebec to do likewise.

As far as we are concerned, if these resolutions are passed or adopted by all the provinces, I said before that the House of Commons has voted on distinct society, and we are prepared to vote on the words chosen by the premiers after a debate in this House. But we will have to wait and see what happens in the provinces, which are working on this right now.

[*English*]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Bouchard has said that he will not take part in any public consultation process. Meech Lake and Charlottetown failed because Canadians were not consulted.

Oral Questions

Knowing this, will the prime minister clarify how the Calgary declaration will be communicated to the people of Quebec and by whom?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with due respect to the hon. member, on Charlottetown people were consulted. There was a referendum. Among the reforms that we favoured was the election of the Senate. The Reform Party voted against it.

At this moment the provinces are doing their work. In due course we will act. I have talked with the premiers and they are doing, in a very different way, the way they want, their own consultations before they vote on the issue. We do not want to duplicate that in the other provinces.

At this moment there is no debate going on before the national assembly on the question of the Calgary declaration. When there is a debate I hope they will consult with the people. If need be we might consult with them, but at this moment the timing is not appropriate.

* * *

[Translation]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech, the government claims to be sensitive to the problems of low income families with children and the problems in the education and health care systems.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Does the Minister of Finance admit that the problems the government has identified in these areas are basically due to the cuts of over \$40 billion it made during its first mandate and intends to keep on making during this mandate?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because of the efforts made by this government, and indeed all Canadians, in terms of putting our fiscal house in order, the government can now afford to provide assistance to society's most disadvantaged, namely poor children.

In fact, our intentions were not expressed only in the throne speech. Judging from recent budgets and the actions taken by my colleague, the Minister of Human Resources Development, and by other colleagues regarding the child tax credit, internship programs and all this government has put in place for the poor in this country, it is very clear that what our government intends to do is to help Canadians, not to divide them.

• (1455)

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the axeman seldom woos his victims, but that is what the Minister of Finance is doing, since he is responsible for poverty in Canada.

By the way, will the minister admit that his solution to health, education and poverty problems is to cut \$42 billion instead of \$48 billion as initially planned? In other words, all he has to offer as a solution is to cut \$6 billion less than he had planned.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the hon. member across the way, where he was before the election, compare the first Campeau budget tabled when the Parti Québécois took office in Quebec with the forecast now being made by Mr. Landry.

He will see that, thanks to federal activities and initiatives, the amount available to Mr. Landry to help the disadvantaged is \$1.5 billion higher than originally planned by Mr. Campeau. I do hope the PQ government will use this money to help the most disadvantaged in Quebec.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when the health minister was recently asked where he would find the money for national pharmacare, he replied: "I don't know but it's a really good idea".

When patients are trapped in the longest waiting lines in history why would anybody be thinking about a brand new national program?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first and fundamental challenge we face with our health care system, and I know the hon. member is aware of this, is restoring the confidence of Canadians in the basic medicare which we have come to know and depend on.

The government is firmly committed to not only the five principles of the Canada Health Act but to working with our partners in the provinces, with providers and with other stakeholders in the system to restore the health system to the quality Canadians expect and deserve.

That is going to mean a lot of work. It is going to mean working with provinces and others to tackle issues such as waiting lists. It is going to mean dealing with—

The Speaker: The hon. member for MacLeod.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, they really had quite a commitment as they chopped 40 per cent from the health care transfers. Now they come along and promise us national medicare with no clue how much this program will cost, with no clue where the money would come from. I call that clueless.

Medicare has suffered and lies wounded. Why would anybody carry on with a brand new program like this when medicare itself needs to be fixed?

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member is a better doctor than he is a mathematician. He knows full well that the cuts by this government were nowhere near 40 per cent.

What I said to my provincial partners is that we are going to work toward pharmacare as a long term goal because this government believes that in the long term the partners should work with us in creating a system where every citizen of this country should have access to the drugs they need and should not be kept from them because of price.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

The Liberal government has cut unemployment insurance by billions of dollars, turning a deaf ear to the cries of alarm coming from the unemployed and from seasonal workers.

How can the minister justify a throne speech that contains nothing at all for the unemployed and for seasonal workers, when he knows that the unemployment insurance fund will again this year produce a surplus of at least \$7 billion?

• (1500)

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will have to take another look at the throne speech, because there are several references to what we are going to do and have been doing for some time now. In particular, we announced a youth employment strategy, which is extremely important. We are working very hard on the unemployment issue and you know it. This strategy, which creates work experience, is doing well.

We have identified tools that worked well and we will consolidate and extend them so that the work experience young people need to make the transition from school to the work place is a very positive one. There is also the transitional job creation fund, \$95 million of which has been invested in job creation in Quebec.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear from the minister's reply that he is not in the least concerned about the plight of seasonal and other workers entering the job market.

My question is not what he is doing to help them re-enter the job market, but what he is doing to help them survive and not all end up on welfare.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about the situation the member describes and I would appreciate it if he listened to the reply, because it is important that he tell his constituents and all those living in his riding what to do.

We have set up a transitional job creation fund. We do not believe in passive income support. Our preference now is for active job creation measures, which we have transferred to the Government of Quebec. We are talking about \$800 million in active job creation measures and a \$95 million transitional job creation fund for Quebec alone, precisely so that people can have real work and not rely on passive income support. That is what our workers want.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

A new American law requiring Canadians crossing into the United States to undergo a lengthy and invasive inspection process could have disastrous effects on Sault Ste. Marie tourism and the normal flow of business between our city and its American neighbours.

What steps is the federal government taking to ensure Canadians will continue to have easy access to the United States?

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the new measures announced by the United States are extremely damaging to Canadian and to American business. They are counter to the initiatives taken by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister to dismantle controls at borders and to promote the free circulation of people and of goods. They are probably counter to NAFTA.

Our objective is to secure the removal of those controls from application at the Canada-U.S. border. We are encouraged already in our efforts by the amendments introduced by a member of the United States Senate and a member of the United States Congress to this effect.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government has made a mess of the Pacific salmon dispute. We have seen four years of mismanagement on this file.

Routine Proceedings

The fisheries minister is from British Columbia. Why was the minister sport fishing in Newfoundland at a time when he should have been dealing with the height of the crisis in British Columbia?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's assertion is incorrect.

The issue, however, of the salmon treaty is an important one. I am disappointed the fisheries critic of the official opposition would choose for his first question such a trivial, irrelevant and inaccurate comment as the one he has made.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech contains not one word about resolving the Pacific salmon dispute. The government continues to show a lack of commitment to British Columbia.

Will the minister make resolving the treaty by January 31 the number one priority of his department?

• (1505)

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are again hearing questioning by Reform members who obviously have not read the throne speech or listened to it.

The fact is that in the throne speech there is a clear commitment to continue to deal with the issue of foreign overfishing.

If the fisheries critic of the official opposition knew something about the problem of the Pacific salmon treaty, he would know that it began because the Alaskans overfished Canadian bound sockeye salmon in northern British Columbia going to the Nass and Skeena Rivers, to the tune of three times what they had done previously under the treaty.

That is what he has not understood and he has not understood that the throne speech addresses it directly.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

STANDING ORDERS

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table a reprinted copy of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons dated June 1997.

* * *

[Translation]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the 1997 report by the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the 36th general election.

This report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

HEALTH AND DRUG ACT

Mr. Jim Gouk (West Kootenay—Okanagan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present three petitions on the same subject that vary a bit.

Each of them calls on the government to reject proposed changes to the Canada Health and Drug Act that would prevent people from taking dietary supplements or herbal goods of their own choice.

NATIONAL HIGHWAYS

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my congratulations on your re-election, Sir.

I have two petitions to present today. The first petition is signed by 30 of my constituents and calls upon Parliament to urge the federal government to join with the provincial governments in making the national highway system upgrading possible beginning in 1997.

• (1510)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by 57 of my constituents.

It calls upon Parliament to enact legislation to amend the Criminal Code, specifically sections 173 and 174, the indecent act and public nudity provisions, to clearly state that a woman exposing her breasts in a public place is an indecent act.

CO-OPERATIVES

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to present a petition on behalf of 57 constituents who live in a co-op housing project on 610 Beatrice Street in my riding.

In part they indicate that the Government of Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation have begun secret negotiations with the province of Ontario, that the people who own and operate co-operatives have been excluded from these negotiations, and that the Government of Ontario has already breached its own agreements with provincially funded housing co-operatives.

They pray that the minister responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing will immediately suspend negotiations on social housing with the province of Ontario and resume negotiations only if the minister proceeds under publicly declared principles established with the input of the co-operative housing stakeholders.

*The Address***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from September 23 consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to open debate on the Speech from the Throne. I wish to begin with some sincere congratulations. First I congratulate you on your re-election to the Chair. I extend best wishes to you on behalf of the members of the official opposition. We wish you patience and wisdom in your deliberations in guiding our deliberations and express the hope that the spirit of democracy expressed on the first day you were elected will continue throughout this Parliament. Congratulations to you, Sir, on behalf of all of us.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

We would like to congratulate the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, and his colleagues on their election.

While we disagree profoundly with the policies of the Bloc, we respect the democratic process that permitted the election of Bloc members to this House. We will continue to try to convince them

and their electors that real reform of the federation is possible and preferable to separation from it.

[*English*]

To the hon. member for Halifax and our NDP colleagues we extend congratulations as well. I also ask the leader of the NDP to convey our best wishes to her predecessor, Ms. Audrey McLaughlin. So often members leave the Chamber of their own accord after serving their time with little acknowledgement or recognition. I ask members to simply join in applauding Ms. McLaughlin for her hard work, her compassion and her contribution to Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Preston Manning: I congratulate the leader of the Conservative Party and his colleagues. We exchanged some harsh words during the course of the election campaign. It is perhaps time to bury the hatchet. I will not try to bury it in his head if he will not try to bury it in mine.

I congratulate the Right Hon. Prime Minister. He has had a long career in politics. We were attempting to terminate it a little earlier but we were not quite successful. It is a remarkable achievement to lead a government into a second term. That is no insignificant accomplishment and we want to congratulate him.

• (1515)

Jason Moscovitz on the night of the election said that the member for Sherbrooke won the leaders debate, that Reform won the campaign but that the Prime Minister won the election. We would have preferred his victory to ours.

I would also like to congratulate the prime minister and his gracious wife Aline on their 40th wedding anniversary a few weeks ago. Forty years is a long time and we take inspiration from the fortitude of Madam Chrétien. If she can put up with the prime minister for 40 years I guess we can put up with him for another four.

To all hon. members I would like to extend congratulations on elections and re-elections. I want to pay a welcome and special tribute to our 60 Reform MPs. We have 40 members who are returning and we have 20 new members, including some of the youngest members in the House of Commons, three under 30 years of age. I would like to say to all the younger MPs and to the new MPs that we wish to encourage them. I think they can bring invigoration and a fresh spirit to this institution which sometimes shows signs of age. I would encourage all members to encourage these new members and to give them the respect they deserve. They do represent really the vanguard of the future and we welcome them to this House.

Last of all but not least I want to acknowledge and thank the people of Calgary Southwest. As I have frequently said to them, this seat in my judgment does not belong to me. It does not belong

The Address

to my party. It is their seat. I consider it an honour to sit in it, occupy it on their behalf and to represent their views.

Turning to more important business, on June 2 over 12 million Canadians participated in the federal election. When the ballots were counted the seats were allocated, whether we like it or not, the way we see them in the House. It seems to me at the outset it would be important to ask ourselves precisely what did Canadians do on June 2 and what message were they endeavouring to send by what they did.

I suggest they were saying four things. First, they reduced the representation of the both the government party and the official opposition of the last Parliament; fewer seats for the Liberals and fewer seats for the Bloc. There is a message in that of dissatisfaction. It was not enough dissatisfaction to upset the government but it was dissatisfaction that the government needs to heed.

Second, the public increased support for three very different parties, the Reform Party, the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives. There is a message in that. The public is searching for different ideas and different personalities to represent different realities in the country. That is one the public wants to see, for better or for worse, reflected in the House. It is incumbent on us to reflect that.

The third is one of the most interesting things. When historians write about the 1997 election I think this is one of the things they will single out. The Canadian people regionalized this Chamber in a way that they have not done for a long time.

If we look at the votes, while Reform got one million votes east of the Manitoba-Ontario border, all our seats are in the west. The Bloc is exclusively a Quebec party. Even within Quebec its vote is regionalized primarily in the area east of Montreal. The NDP is divided between members in Atlantic Canada, in the west, but with no seats at all in central Canada. The Progressive Conservatives have 90 per cent of their seats east of Ontario, with a majority in Atlantic Canada. While the Conservatives will continue to represent themselves as a national party in the House they are in essence an Atlantic party with a Quebec contingent.

For the government of course two-thirds of its seats are in Ontario, with half of the remainder in Quebec. While in theory it too is a national party, or claims to be a national party, in fact in the House it is an Ontario party with a Quebec contingent.

• (1520)

If there is a lesson in this, it is that this country continues to pay a price for failing to reform the upper house. In Germany, Australia, the United States and in other big federations of the world regional interests are expressed in their federal arenas through an effective upper chamber. When you do not have that one of the consequences is a regionalization of your lower house.

Those who think regionalization of this House is a backward step or something that will hurt national unity should join the ranks of those who demand an effective upper chamber to represent regional interests.

The fourth thing that Canadians did in 1997 was allow a 10 year old federal party, with roots in the west and proud of it, and with aspirations to become a truly national party, to occupy the role of official opposition and to become the alternative to the government.

As we begin that new role and analyse the Speech from the Throne, we owe it to the public to share with it how we see this role being discharged.

We see ourselves as having a twofold mandate. The first is to hold the government accountable, to commend it on actions which we consider in the national interests but to criticize it on actions which we consider not to be in the national interests. Second, we see our role as one of proposing constructive alternatives consistent with the big themes of equality, accountability and fiscal responsibility on which our members were elected.

In relation to the Speech from the Throne I would like to perform these two functions. I want to commend the government where it deserves commendation. We want to criticize the features of the speech which we consider inadequate. Most important, we want to present constructive alternatives where we see those deficiencies.

As the Speech from the Throne remarked, the 36th Parliament of Canada is a transition Parliament. It is the last Parliament of the 20th century and the first of the 21st century. Therefore people can ask in which direction it is going to look. Is it going to continually look back over its shoulder at old ideas and concepts from the past or is it going to squarely face the future?

The throne speech professes to look ahead. It is important that we look at the reality behind the words.

I see a great historical and political analogy between the end of the 19th century politically and the end of the 20th century. By the end of the 19th century the governing party, the Conservative Party, had run out of leadership, ideas and energy. It had run out of steam.

Macdonald, the guiding light, was gone. The lesser lights, though well meaning, who took his place were unable to build on the foundation which he had laid. Once new ideas, such as the federal union, the national policy or the transcontinental railway, were by that point in time the status quo. As J. Arthur Lower the historian put it, the once vital era of Macdonald sputtered to a dreary conclusion after the death of its guiding spirit.

While an exhausted government was still running the country, Canada itself was bursting with the new ideas, new energies and new potentials of the 20th century, and while the government was mired in the past, the people started to seek ways and means to

The Address

express their frustrations with a government whose time had past. With their desire to see new ideas expressed in the federal arena they started to search for new personalities and new groups. The personality they settled on was Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the new group of MPs around him.

The throne speech quotes Sir Wilfrid Laurier. I would like to quote Sir Wilfrid Laurier back to the government. He said about the government of the day's unwillingness to face realities: "A true patriot does not, like the ostrich, hide his head in the sand and ignore the facts, but he looks the real situation of the country in the face".

He was talking about fiscal realities. He described Canada not as a country led and inspired by government policy but as a young giant shackled and manacled by government policy.

He said about the Conservative government which was re-elected in 1891 but with a reduced majority: "Another such victory and the government is undone".

• (1525)

He said about the need for a fresh start: "I say that the time has come for gentlemen on the other side to cease their boasting and self-glorification and for the people of the country to open their eyes and see that a new departure must be made from the policy which has been followed for the last 10 years. I have said that a change has become absolutely necessary to the well-being of the country".

Sir Wilfrid Laurier on the weakness of the previous government's legislative program in a debate on the speech from the throne, precisely like this, said: "The speech from the throne has been for some years past a very dry skeleton. This year it is drier than ever and the few bones that are in it rattle together with an ominous sound".

I see a striking parallel between the end of the 19th century politically and the end of the 20th. The once great Liberal Party is running out of steam. The leading lights, Laurier, King, Trudeau, gone. Once new ideas, constitutional change, unity through special status, the welfare state as a way to care for people, prosperity through government spending; all of those ideas are either passé or hopelessly out of date.

Canada outside of Parliament is brimming with ideas, excitement, ways to solve problems, ideas that see little reflection in the representations of the government or in the speech from the throne. I suggest that the current government, like the old Tories that followed Macdonald's day, is mired in the past and out of touch with reality.

The throne speech, despite forward looking language, offers no brilliant illumination of the horizon of the new millennium. There is no connection to the forces of innovation and change and reform that are at large in the country which if harnessed to national policy

will help propel Canada into the 21st century with vigour and optimism.

I say in applying glorious analogy to this throne speech, it is a dry bone speech lacking in the flesh and blood and muscle and sinew and heart and soul required to inspire Canadians for the 21st century.

I would apply the words exactly: "The speech from the throne has been for some years a very dry skeleton. This year is drier than ever and the few bones that are in it rattle together with an ominous sound".

With this sobering historical parallel and Laurier's analogy before us let us analyse the government's speech from the throne. We want to examine the dry bones. We want to give credit where credit is due. As any dog will tell you, a dry bone is better than no bone at all.

Where deficiencies exist what we will endeavour to do is not simply to be critical but to offer new ideas that can perhaps turn this dry bones throne speech into something vibrant and new and appropriate to leading the country into the 21st century.

Let me look first at the economy. The government proposes little with respect to the economy. It mentions none of the resource sectors. It mentions nothing about the manufacturing sector. It does mention investing in knowledge and creativity.

We find all the government's references to high technology tiresome because the rhetoric is there and yet we cannot even get electronic voting in this House. Let us start practising high tech if we believe in high tech and not just talking about it.

The principal argument in the government's throne speech with respect to facilitating economic recovery is that it now has the deficit under control. When we first came here in 1993 our analysis was that the federal financial vehicle had four flat tires. One of them was the deficit, one was that spending was out of control, one was the debt out of control, the other was taxes out of control.

The government has partially fixed one of those flat tires, and we give it credit for doing that. We disagree with the way it was done. We do not think the timetable was right but at least one of those tires is now getting close to being in good shape.

The question is what to do about the other three tires. In the speech from the throne there is virtually little or nothing on the subject of how to fix the problem of the debt and how to fix the problem of excessive taxation and how to ensure that future spending will not get out of control the way it did in the past.

• (1530)

We ask where are the commitments in this speech from the throne to debt reduction targets and tax reduction targets? Where are the principles that will guide us on these issues? Does the government have a view on what is the optimal size of government, on what is the optimal revenue that it should be taking out of the economy? Does it have a view on what is the optimal debt size

The Address

for a government of this nature in this type of a country? The government may say wait for the budget, but the government had no hesitation at all about naming 29 measures for spending more money with absolutely nothing on these other great questions.

My colleague, the member for Medicine Hat, has been circulating a discussion paper entitled "Beyond a Balanced Budget". What he is finding and what we have found for the last three years is that there are all kinds of ideas out there in the country, with the think tanks, with the business people who have had to rationalize these problems within their companies or they would go under, with younger Canadians who have been thinking about these things because it is their future that is jeopardized. The tragedy is that very little of that thinking is seen at all in the government's program or in the speech from the throne.

My colleagues in their discussion of the speech from the throne and in legislation that comes before this House will endeavour to bring that muscle, sinew, tissue, spirit and body required to add some substance to the dry bones on economic recovery contained in the throne speech.

Let me talk for a moment about the social safety net. The government to its credit acknowledges that the social safety net is frayed, that we are in trouble with respect to health care, with respect to pensions, with respect to child poverty and in some respects with regard to education. We agree with that assessment. However, in the throne speech there is only dry bones, administrative tinkering to deal with the problems of these programs.

The social safety net in our judgment requires a new approach. It requires acknowledgement that the frontline caregivers in this country, mothers, fathers, families, and services given by governments closer to the people are the elements of social safety nets that need to be strengthened by government policy. Where is the recognition in the speech from the throne that many government initiated social programs, no matter how well meaning they would be, are simply no longer affordable, no longer workable and no longer even supported by the clients that they were intended to serve.

The speech from the throne refers to children but it seems to refer to children as if they were disembodied spirits not connected in any way, shape or form with families. In fact they are in most cases connected with families, many of them in desperate straits. That family is the most important primary caregiver in our judgment and if you want to do something for social policy, do something for the family.

The hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill and other of our colleagues will be advancing some new principles and ideas for real social reform in the days ahead. We do not just criticize the

government's attempts to patch up a creaking welfare state. We think that there are new ideas that involve personalizing, decentralizing and localizing social service delivery that can offer more hope to people in the future. That will be our contribution to this throne speech debate in the area of social reform.

With respect to criminal justice, we look at the speech from the throne and we ask what happened to the new justice minister's new tough agenda on criminal justice that was announced in August. She was going to do something to tighten up the Young Offenders Act. She was going to have sentencing reform. She was going to have parole reform. Yet there is absolutely nothing on that in the speech from the throne at all. The one sentencing measure actually made sentencing easier rather than tougher.

Where is the response to the needs of victims of crime? I think of the families of the victims of Clifford Olson and what they have endured as a result of the faint hope clause. Did the government not feel any twinge of conscience in seeing those people watch Clifford Olson parade passed the cameras on his way to a parole hearing? Our hearts go out to them. I feel like apologizing to them on behalf of at least part of this Parliament for our inability to prevent them from suffering the pain that they did.

Where is the government's response to families that suffer and are at risk because of violence and because of defects in the Young Offenders Act, defects in the parole system, defects in the court system and defects in the penal system?

● (1535)

I think of the member for Surrey North, himself a victim of crime with the murder of his son, and how he has struggled and fought to get to this House so he could represent victims. When it comes to the speech from the throne, this being the passion of his political life, what does he see? He sees a little section with three or four paragraphs in it. It would have been better, Mr. Prime Minister, to have not had that section in the speech than to have it there with such a bare bones agenda.

My colleagues, particularly the member for Crowfoot and others interested in criminal justice reform on the Reform side, will endeavour to remedy this deficiency in the government's legislative program by proposing reforms, particularly those that put the rights of victims ahead of anything else.

With respect to accountability, members who were here in 1993 will remember that the throne speech referred on numerous occasions to integrity, to ethics, to ethics commissioners, to guidelines for ministers, to accountability. We cannot help but notice in this year's throne speech that element is completely missing.

In no way does the government accept responsibility for political interference with the Somalia inquiry. In no way does it acknowl-

The Address

edge its responsibilities in that area and agree to implement the recommendations of that aborted inquiry.

We see no acceptance of responsibility by the government in stonewalling the Krever inquiry. It was all for that inquiry as long as it was looking into the misdeeds of the Tory government. As soon as it started to get back to the period before that, the government stonewalled the inquiry.

Perhaps most serious of all is that we see nothing in the throne speech which would make ministers more accountable to this House and politicians generally more accountable to the people of Canada. If you go out not just in this country but in virtually every country in the world, there is a current running around ordinary people demanding a greater degree of accountability from their politicians. This is not just a phenomenon in Canada. It is a phenomenon in eastern Europe. It is a phenomenon in China. It is a phenomenon in Asia. It is a worldwide phenomenon: democratic revolution from the bottom up.

Yet there is not a flicker of recognition in the speech from the throne of that desire for accountability, not even a willingness to look at some of the mechanisms that can be used to hold people more accountable: greater use of referenda mechanisms; greater use of citizens initiatives; treating petitions with respect instead of parading them here in the House and storing them in the basement the next day never to see light again.

In speaking on the speech from the throne, one of the things that we will endeavour to add to the non-existent skeleton of public accountability is a proposal for making this chamber and its members, not just ourselves but all members, more accountable to the people whom we serve.

Lastly I want to turn to the never ending subject of national unity. I note that the government has made some modest changes in its approach to national unity, small steps I suggest, but in the right direction.

In 1995 prior to the last referendum the government was completely unwilling to challenge the legality of a unilateral secession. It was unwilling to address with frankness and clarity the practical, hard questions that arise when some province decides to secede; issues like boundaries, debt allocation, what happens to minorities who do not want to remain in the seceding province, et cetera. Not only did the government not have that on its agenda, but it castigated as traitors to the unity effort those who insisted such questions be dealt with and that such consequences be communicated to the people of Quebec.

Until recently the government has also been putting all its unity eggs in one basket, a basket with a hole in it. It has been relying on the distinct society clause to move public opinion in Quebec, despite the fact that that has been tried before and despite the lack

of support elsewhere in the country for that approach. That was the government's position in 1995. As I say, we see now some modest changes.

• (1540)

The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, to his credit, is starting to address the negative consequences of secession and we commend his efforts.

The government appears to be accepting some advice from the premiers, although we question this based on the Prime Minister's replies in question period today. However, we thought there was some movement in accepting the inadequacies of the distinct society clause and accepting the premiers' view that the language has to be changed and the concept has to be changed. The concept should be changed by marrying it to the principle of equality and making crystal clear that any recognition of uniqueness in Quebec or elsewhere, a uniqueness that we applaud, will not confer on one province powers not conferred on another.

These changes are far too small. They do not add up to a fresh vigorous vision or federalist initiative to unite the country for the 21st century. They are just a skeleton, dry bones rattling against each other. If the government desires to clothe the skeleton of its national unity strategy with real spirit, substance and muscle, I would urge it to start accepting more substantive proposals from other quarters beginning with the premiers. Let me mention what some of these would be.

The section in the throne speech on unity is extremely brief. It contains only one paragraph recognizing the work of the premiers in Calgary on September 14. The paragraph reads:

The government will work closely with provincial and territorial governments to further advance the progress made by nine premiers and the territorial leaders last week in Calgary toward the full recognition of the diversity inherent in the federation, including the unique character of Quebec society.

Members who have read the premiers' declaration from Calgary will note the selective editing in the speech from the throne. It quotes what the premiers said about diversity and uniqueness. We have no quarrel with that. However, it completely ignores what they said about equality of citizens and provinces, and it completely ignores the subject to which they devoted three-quarters of their communique, namely a process to involve the public at the front end of the consideration of any proposals having to do with national unity.

The official opposition urges the federal government to pay more attention to what premiers and Reformers have said on both equality and on public participation.

The premiers' framework of principles for discussion mentioned equality five times. In the throne speech the government uses a hundred adjectives to describe Canada but it does not make one single mention of the equality of citizens and provinces.

The Address

If the government thinks it can develop a unity position that ignores the principle of equality of citizens and provinces and more importantly, ignores practical measures to make it workable in the real world, which involves getting equality into the exercise of the federal spending and taxing powers, if the government thinks it can ignore that principle, it will be designing a unity position that will not be acceptable to millions of Canadians. Why take that chance on the unity issue?

We also say if we take the premiers seriously that the government should develop a deeper commitment to public consultation on unity initiatives. It could start by doing two things. It could start by assuring this House that it will respect the output of the public consultations the premiers are initiating in their provinces even if it does not agree with all the points that are raised.

More particularly, the government will answer definitively the question asked today by the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona: What is its role going to be in ensuring that unity proposals developed in the rest of the country are heard and considered in the province of Quebec?

Lack of meaningful public involvement was the single greatest weakness of past constitutional efforts. It marred the 1982 Constitution. It was not just some Quebec politicians who were left out of the 1982 Constitution, it was the public who were left out. It marred Meech. It was fatal to Meech.

Then there was the consultation that was done in Charlottetown. The public's view was that it was after the fact consultation. Meech was just packaged up in a slightly different form. Spicer went out across the country and came up with dozens and dozens of recommendations, not one of which really found its way into the Charlottetown accord.

• (1545)

We Canadians, in pursuit of national unity, have been like a family packed into the family car trying to get to a destination called united Canada. But so far the only people who get to drive the car are old line politicians and leaders. Canadians are jammed in the back asking "Are we getting to united Canada yet? Are we getting to a united Canada?"

But what has been our experience? For a number of years we let Mr. Trudeau drive the car. Everyone remembers Trudeau, one hand on the wheel—he was a great cavalier driver—and the other hand out the window giving the finger to Alberta and other places. We forgive him in retrospect. Canadians in the back are asking "Have we got to a united Canada?" And what did Trudeau say? He said "We have not got there but it just over constitution hill. Get to constitution hill and we will have a united Canada." We got to constitution hill. We got the 1982 Constitution and we were not at

united Canada. In fact Levesque was getting car sick in the back and tried kick out the window.

Then we got another driver, Prime Minister Mulroney. Canadians in the back were asking "Are we at a united Canada yet?" And he said "No, but it is just over there by Meech Lake." So we go to Meech Lake and we are not at united Canada. He said "No, it is at Charlottetown." We go to Charlottetown and we are not at united Canada yet.

A little later our current Prime Minister gets to drive the car. He drives very, very slowly. And we are in the back asking "Are we at united Canada? Mr. Prime Minister, are we there yet? Are we there yet?" But there is no answer. He is dozing at the wheel and we almost went into the ditch at the referendum.

The distinguishing characteristic of all these drivers, and every male member of the House can identify with this, they never stop to ask instructions about how to drive.

We are saying that if we stop to ask instructions that the public has good sense of where a united Canada lies. That is why I plead with the Prime Minister to give greater weight to public consultation. If you come up with some new initiative on uniting Canada, certainly the House has to look at it and give it due deliberation. What is even more important is that the public gets a kick at the cat at the front end because if they do not they are going to reject whatever package we come up with no matter how well it is conceived.

What are some of the other things that maybe should be in a national unity initiative that really address where the public's mind is at? I suggest one of the other ingredients which the premiers are starting to talk about is a rebalancing of the powers and also institutional change.

We had a meeting of our little caucus unity team just this week. If we had been writing the speech from the throne and wanted to demonstrate to Canadians that we had some substances behind our unity proposals, what would have been in our legislative package that might have sent that signal? I have a list two pages long. We would have had a bill expressly recognizing equality of citizens of provinces and applying that principle to the exercise of the federal spending and taxation power. Some day in the House I would like to discuss in detail the inequality that exists in the country with respect to the exercise of the federal spending and taxing powers.

We would have had a bill with statutory adjustments respecting provincial jurisdiction over natural resources, respecting provincial jurisdiction over worker training, respecting provincial jurisdiction over social services, respecting provincial jurisdiction over housing, respecting provincial jurisdiction over tourism. We do not regard, nor do most of the provinces regard, mere administrative agreements which vary from province to province and do not exist

in half of the provinces, as being anywhere near recognition of provincial responsibility in these areas.

We would enact bills to strengthen the economic and Canadian union. Where is the bill from the government to establish a mechanism to beat down internal barriers to trade? This House has the power to pass that bill whether the provinces agree with it or not.

• (1550)

Where is an act to facilitate the development of national standards? The federal contribution to the total health care bill is now less than 10 per cent. It will be technically and economically unfeasible for the junior partner in health care to dictate standards in the way it did in the past. That does not mean we will not have national standards or that people do not want them, but we need a new mechanism for the federal government to facilitate national standards for interprovincial agreement.

I look at the speech from the throne and if I were an aboriginal person I would not pick it up. There is nothing in it that really addresses the problems of aboriginal people. Where is the bill that starts to decentralize and ultimately do away with the department of Indian affairs and transfers functions and funding to local aboriginal governments? Where is the parallel bill? They will never get that bill accepted even by rank and file aboriginal people unless there is a parallel bill establishing mechanisms for financial accountability and democratic accountability on reserves.

Where are the bills and motions to strengthen the regional sensitivity and accountability of national institutions? Where is the motion in the House to amend the standing orders so that the defeat of a government motion does not result in the defeat of the government unless specifically designated a vote of non-confidence? That would allow more regional representation in this House than it has ever enjoyed.

Where is a non-constitutional Senate reform amendment, at least to make the place elected? Where is the constitutional resolution to at least start the Senate reform process? Where is representation by population in this House? Where is the bill to get that? If the upper House was regionalized we could have genuine representation by population in this House and it would be different in the upper House.

Where is the bill to provide for constituent assemblies if and when this country ever decides to completely write its Constitution? This House is supposed to be looking ahead. We cannot wait until the day when Canadians finally decide they want to rewrite the Constitution to start setting the mechanism up. We should set the mechanisms up in advance. Two mechanisms are needed. One

The Address

is a bill for constituent assemblies, the other is an ironclad guarantee of constitutional referenda at the end of the day.

I suggest to the government that if it had brought in a package of those types of proposals, or even the promise of bringing them, it would add up to something. They add up to a Canada that respects uniqueness. They add up to a Canada that respects equality. They add up to a Canada that has the institutional arrangements to make that practical. They add up to a new division of powers for the 21st century. There is none of that in this speech from the throne.

To add breadth and depth to national unity strategies we ask where are the policy initiatives to address the big regional concerns that are so apparent in this House? If the federal government had been truly consulting Canadians it would be acutely aware of our regional differences. I said at the outset that this House more accurately expresses some of those regional differences than many House have in the past.

I was frankly surprised when I first opened the speech from the throne that some of the big headings were not the regional interests of the country. Where in the speech from the throne is the new Atlantic Canadian economic initiative, one that recognizes that the approaches of the past, the subsidies and handouts and that type of thing, are simply not working? Where is the economic initiative that uses the new tools of expanding trade, of beating down internal barriers to trade, of expanding trade with New England and of making Atlantic Canada the gateway to European trade with the American community? Where is the proposal for public-private partnerships to build roads and short line railways and container ports? There is nothing in this speech about the new ideas that are out there and nothing related to Atlantic Canada.

I ask where is the new vision for Quebec, the *troisième voie*? In this throne speech there is no fresh vision for Quebec.

[*Translation*]

There is no third option for Quebec. There is no option between separation and the federalism we have today. There is nothing but the revamping of the division of powers under way at present. There is no third option which would allow a true reform of the federation by rebalancing powers.

• (1555)

[*English*]

With all the new Ontario members in this House, surely in caucus they must have been looking for an open invitation from the federal government to develop a co-ordinated fiscal policy to sustain the economic recovery in Ontario. We simply cannot have the biggest government in the country, this government, and the

The Address

government of the biggest province in the country, Ontario, pursuing fiscal policies that are either going in opposite directions or at 90° to one another. You could not think of a way to hinder economic recovery better than that. You cannot have Ontario with the priority of tax relief and the federal government having the priority to spend. The danger to the investor is he sees that whatever tax relief Ontario gives, the federal government will move in to that tax room and the taxpayer will never see it.

What about the north, our last frontier, demographically and ecologically? There is no recognition of the north, no vision of the north. Even Diefenbaker had a vision of the north. He did not have much substance but he tried to get a vision of the north. The north is completely neglected, left as a distant ward of the federal government, ignored or forgotten.

I left the best for the last, the west. I ask the government members to listen for a moment. Where is the acknowledgement and the recognition of the new west and what it brings to Canada's 21st century? There is a new influence for good, for prosperity and for unity emerging in this country. It is an influence whose strength and vitality in the 21st century is like that of Atlantic Canada in the 19th century and Quebec and Ontario in the 20th century. It is the growing influence of the new west, that portion of our country that stretches from western Ontario across the vast prairies and woodlands of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, into the plains and foothills of Alberta, across the mighty Rockies to the Pacific coast of the great province of British Columbia.

The new west is built on the principle of freedom of enterprise, fiscal responsibility, compassion for the young, the old, the sick and the poor, equality of citizens and provinces and democracy that reflects the common sense of the common people.

The new west is exercising new muscles and energy, not simply to get its old grievances addressed, but by offering a new source of hope and energy to unify our country and strengthen our economy.

Reform is the principal spokesperson for the new west in the federal Parliament. Those who think that Reform is simply a protest party or that the new political energy in the west is simply protest are 15 years behind the times. The west can take care of its own regional grievances. The west believes that it can compete with the Americans and beat them two times out of three if it is on a level playing field. It demonstrates it every day.

Pacific rim trade is now twice Atlantic rim trade. Its possibilities are infinite. The greatest single private sector job creation machine is operating today in the city of Calgary. It is no longer based on oil and gas. It is an example that can be multiplied in other parts of country. The west is ready to bring those ideas and energies to the national scene, not simply to advance its interests, not to protect its interests, but to make a contribution to the new Canada.

This throne speech fails to speak to that spirit in the west. It fails to try to harness that substance to the national interest and thus misses a golden opportunity at the end of the 20th century to harness energy and vigour to the task of uniting our country and making our economy strong.

I conclude by commenting on the the dry bones throne speech once again. Perhaps some would say that dry bones are enough. I hear an hon. member saying that it is, but there are others among us who are not satisfied. There are those of us who want something bigger, deeper, fuller and wider; who want tissue, muscle, heart, spirit and soul added to those bones; who want to exit the 20th century with a baying, not with a whimper. This throne speech is a whimper.

• (1600)

I do not believe the government is up to that challenge but prove me wrong if I am wrong. The challenge to other members of this House, and I do not just say Reform members, I say the challenge to other members in this House, including some of the government backbenchers who know that what I am saying is true, our challenge is that what realities the government has failed to recognize, let us recognize. What sources the government has failed to consult, let us consult. What voices the government has failed to hear, let us speak for them. What values the government has failed to represent, let us represent. What ideas the government has failed to acknowledge, let us pursue. What policies the government has failed to develop, let us propose. What hope the government has failed to give, let us inspire so that the 21st century does in truth belong to Canada.

To sum up, I move:

That the following words be added to the address: "and this House regrets that your government is proposing a legislative program that is mired in the past, out of touch with the present, and incapable of leading Canadians with foresight and vigour into the 21st century".

The Speaker: This is an opposition amendment to the speech from the throne moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week we begin the last Parliament of this century and the first of the new millennium.

I congratulate you on your election and express to you my high regard for your office. You bring decorum and dignity to this House and represent its great traditions and the historic responsibilities of your office.

Among those responsibilities which you discharge so will, is turning off the microphones when they are meant to be off. I can assure you that both my party and I will support you fully in this task and the other important functions of your office.

The Address

I also want to congratulate the hon. member from Parkdale-High Park for her eloquent speech as mover of the address in reply to the speech from the throne, and the hon. member from Beauce for his speech as seconder. I am very proud of their maiden speeches and I must say their careers are definitely off to a good start. I can tell both members have great futures ahead of them in this House.

• (1605)

Since I last spoke in the House, we have had a general election. This is the 11th time I have been elected to Parliament. The voters of Saint-Maurice have supported me for the tenth time and their confidence in me inspires me in my public life. They have taught me that politics is about people.

What I've learned on the sidewalks of Shawinigan, at the kitchen tables of rural farmhouses, and with workers on factory floors enriches all I do here as a member of Parliament and Prime Minister. The people of Saint-Maurice want a government that listens to them and respects them, and that is the kind of government I want to lead.

[*English*]

Parliament opens appropriately as another glorious Canadian summer comes to its end. Our farmers reap their harvest and the young return to school. This fall, Canadians, especially young Canadians, begin to reap the rewards of what we have done together in the past four years.

When I stood before you in January 1994, many forecasted bleak economic harvests in our future. In reply to the speech from the throne I said then that everything that we would do would be "aimed at rebuilding our economic vitality to ensure that every Canadian is able to realize his or her potential".

Now we can say that we needed no polls to tell us that most Canadians did not think that we could ever gain control of the massive deficit that had deeply wounded the economy and Canadian self-confidence.

Who then would have believed that Canada would create 974,000 jobs between October 1993 and September 1997? Who then would have predicted that our interest rates would fall far below those of the United States, in fact three and three-quarter per cent for the prime rate?

Who then would have believed that we would have inflation lower than 2 per cent, growth close to 4 per cent and the highest rate of job creation in the G-7? Who then would have believed that four years later all the international forecasters would be predicting that Canada will enter the next millennium with the best economic performance of the G-7 countries?

Who then would have believed that I would be joining Canada's premiers in a spirit of co-operation in the fall of 1997 to discuss how we could help our youth, how we could improve our health system, how we could strengthen our social programs in an era of balanced budgets?

By working together, by being bold, by conquering fear and despair, Canadians have done much for themselves and for others. We have rebuilt economic vitality. Indeed last week the Governor of the Bank of Canada said, "Canada is in better shape now than it has been for many years to face the economic challenges of the future". He said, "The Canadian economy has the potential for a long period of sustained growth in output and employment, with rising productivity and improving living standards".

• (1610)

Now is the time for Canadians to realize their vast potential, to turn toward the new century, to invest wisely and strategically in people and ideas, to build a secure foundation for Canada's future.

We made our priorities clear in the election campaign and in the speech from the throne. We will invest in children, our most precious resource. We will invest in knowledge to prepare Canada's youth for the technologies and knowledge based society of the future. We will work closely with the provinces to strengthen our health system following the excellent suggestions of the National Forum on Health.

As a nation we invested in medicare exactly 30 years ago. I was in the House when we did that. What incredible dividends it has paid to Canadians, to our economy and even to our sense of identity. By strengthening and modernizing medicare to meet new needs, our health care system in the 21st century will yield even greater returns.

I would like with your permission, Mr. Speaker, to salute the Minister of Finance who introduced medicare, Mr. Sharp, who is in the gallery.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the election campaign we said that we would spend some of our fiscal dividend on health care.

We will be introducing legislation to increase health care transfers to the provinces in accordance with the recommendation of the National Forum on Health that the cash floor be \$12.5 billion. This means that in 1998-99 the provinces will receive \$700 million more than is currently budgeted. In 1999-2000 the provinces will receive \$1.4 billion more than is currently budgeted. Canada will remain the best country in which to live because it cares about its people. These are words that we did not hear in the speech from the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon.

The Address

We will work very hard to continue to strengthen the economy, to continue to create a climate for more jobs and for sustained economic growth.

I want to pay tribute today to the Minister of Finance for his remarkable achievement in managing the finances of the nation. I want to tell the House that we will never again allow the finances of the country to get out of control. We have already begun to reduce the debt as a proportion of the size of the economy. By 1998-99 the government will balance the budget for the first time in almost 30 years.

• (1615)

Working together with members of Parliament, with the provinces and, above all, with Canadians, we have removed the burden on our future that the deficit represented. No longer will we pass on present problems to future generations of Canadians. No longer will we have the large deficit that prevented governments from meeting real human needs. No longer will anyone be able to call Canada a bankrupt nation worth leaving. No longer will critics say that Canadian federalism does not work.

Canada is working so well that leaders throughout the world are speaking about the Canadian miracle and the Canadian model. There is a new optimism in Canada. Canadians have begun to dream again, and this Parliament's challenge is to live up to the spirit of those dreams.

Now we must move forward together into a new millennium. Many in the House today are having their first taste of Parliament. From my long experience I can say that the taste will be enormously satisfying, of course spicy at times but in the end satisfying. Some denigrate what Parliament can do but they are wrong.

I have seen over the years how individual MPs on all sides of the House advance causes they believe important to them, their constituents and Canadians. Over the last four years our government has opened this process more fully than ever before for private members' bills, for serious work by parliamentary committees and for open participation in parliamentary debate. We will continue.

The situation today is much better than when I became a member of Parliament. Even as a private member I was able to pass an important private member's bill changing the name of Trans-Canada airline. I worked with colleagues on both sides of the House. I asked some of them to shut up and to help, and we made that change. My success was shared with members on both sides of the House.

When I first got on a plane marked Air Canada I knew that the new member for Saint-Maurice had made a little difference. Many members will, as individuals and as part of this great Parliament, make a difference.

[*Translation*]

Let me tell you what we can do together as Canadians and parliamentarians. When I first entered Parliament, Canada faced a major crisis of poverty among seniors. Despite general prosperity, many seniors found themselves victims of inflation and of the fact they had not been able to save much during the hard years of depression and war.

The challenge was great, and the responsibility for dealing with it was shared. The federal government had an old age pension scheme, but, of course, the provinces had principal responsibilities in health, welfare and housing.

• (1620)

The government of Canada worked with the provinces and through Parliament used the flexibility and creativity of our federal system to confront seniors' poverty. We proved then that we share more than we admit; we differ less than we profess. Saskatchewan led in medicare; Quebec worked effectively on pensions; and Ontario and New Brunswick were innovative in housing. But it was the Government of Canada that gave national leadership to assure that the creativity of our individual provinces was shared by all Canadians.

Today the rate of seniors' poverty in Canada is less than one-third of what it was only a generation ago. When the UN names Canada as the best country in the world to live in, it is partly because our seniors now live much longer lives, and are more comfortable financially. And in this mandate my government will assure seniors' security for the future. We will introduce legislation this fall to sustain the Canada Pension Plan and the Senior's Benefit, making Canada the first G-7 country to make its public pension system affordable and sustainable for the millennium.

[*English*]

As we responded to the challenge of seniors health and poverty a generation ago, we must now face the challenge of a new generation of Canadians. They are the generation which will inherit Canada in the new millennium. They are our children and our grandchildren, and they will judge our generation by how well we have prepared theirs for the 21st century.

Election campaigns are exciting for me, as for all of us, because we get a real chance to meet Canadians of every kind. My wife tells me that my excitement is greatest when I am around young people. The hopes and the dreams of the young are an inspiration for me, but in recent campaigns I heard too many fears mixed with their dreams.

Let me say frankly that we have lots of work to do. With the fiscal crisis at an end, our government has more ability to act.

The Address

As the Minister of Finance said in his last budget, “a government relieved of its deficit burden is not a government relieved of its obligations. It is a government able to exercise its obligations”.

We owe our greatest obligation to our young, the future of Canada. As I think of the hopeful yet troubled eyes of the young people I met this summer, I become even more determined that our government will not evade its own responsibilities and opportunities.

I know, as all of us do, that poverty is an enemy of a good start whether in aboriginal communities or in the urban centres of Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax. Parental love, family support and strong communities are antidotes to poverty’s sting but they are not enough. People also need our help. By investing now in the well-being of today’s children we are improving the long term social and economic health of our society. Together federal and provincial governments must respond through the national child benefit system we are now building.

• (1625)

During the course of this Parliament we pledge to do more to meet the needs of low income families with children. We will do so by increasing the child tax benefit and we will work in co-operation with the provinces as they invest in services for children. Children must remain at the top of our national agenda. We must make certain that wherever they live or whatever their background they have a head start on a good future. A head start helps but it is not a guarantee they will win the race or even finish it.

We have the best educated young Canadians in history. Young Canadians can go to the best schools in the world, but too many drop out and too many do not find work. Youth unemployment is simply too high.

The private sector has created almost a million new jobs over the past four years, but as a society we need to do more to create jobs for young people. We will discuss this and more at the first ministers meeting this fall.

We will step up our efforts at offering first jobs through internships and summer placements. We will challenge the private sector to train young Canadians to take leadership roles in the new knowledge based society of the future. We will challenge the private sector to do more to meet the employment needs of young people. We will develop with the provinces a mentorship program, and we will partner with the provinces and communities to give the young at risk a better chance at acquiring the skills and experience they need.

The more education young people have, the better are their chances to find a job. We will challenge parents, communities, schools and provincial governments to encourage young people to stay in school.

In my family every spare penny my parents could save went to education. For my parents the grass was greener on the other side of the fence and education was the way their children could get into greener fields. Even though I was a bit of a trouble maker at school—and I have kept a bit of it—my parents never lost their dream for me and my better behaved brothers and sisters. Their faith and devotion to our education put the spring in our leap that carried us over to the other side of the fence. Today, together, parents, communities and governments must assure the barriers are not so high that young Canadians do not make it to the other side of the fence.

The struggle against the deficit was not undertaken so that we could celebrate our accounting accomplishments. We fought to lessen the debt burden hanging over an entire generation. We fought so that we could reduce payments to bankers and begin to invest in the future of our young people. That is what we are going to do.

We on this side of the House, plus two or three on the other side, do not believe that the role of government should be that of the 19th century laissez-faire state waiting to deal with emergencies.

• (1630)

Rather we believe government in the 21st century is an efficient, effective partner to make wise and strategic investments in areas that really count for the future prosperity of our country. One of the most important of these areas is knowledge and learning. It is the key to growth and jobs in years ahead.

That is why, in the last budget, we announced the creation of a Canadian Foundation for Innovation. With the dividends from successful fiscal management, we made a one-time investment of \$800 million designed to rebuild the research infrastructure of our universities and teaching hospitals.

While I do not want to scoop the fiscal update of the Minister of Finance which will be delivered in mid-October, it is no secret that because of the good work of the government and of the Minister of Finance, we are doing a great deal better in 1997-98 than had originally been projected.

I expect, therefore, that in the weeks after the Minister of Finance tables his fiscal update to be able to take advantage of another dividend from our successful fiscal management, to announce the deal of another one-time investment in learning and knowledge similar to what we did last year when we created the Canadian Foundation for Innovation but on a bigger scale.

This time the purpose of the investment in our future will be to reduce barriers to access post-secondary education. There can be no greater millennium project for Canada and no better role for government than to help young Canadians prepare for the knowledge based society of the next century.

The Address

As our most significant millennium project we will establish an arm's length from government a Canada millennium scholarship endowment fund. The income from the fund will reward academic excellence and will provide thousands of scholarships each year, beginning in the year 2000 for low and moderate income Canadians to help them attend universities and colleges.

We will be working closely with appropriate partners to help in the actual design of the fund. It will not be a monument made of bricks and mortar but when future Canadians look around, they will see its legacy everywhere.

I hope it can do in the 21st century for our economy and our country what the investment after World War II in post-secondary education did for our returning soldiers, for our economy and our country in the last half of the 20th century.

On a very personal basis I hope it will be able to do in a different area for many thousands of young Canadians what my parents were able to do for me, my brothers and my sisters.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

In addition to this one-time endowment, the government will make further changes to the Canada Student Loans Programme and will increase assistance for students with dependents. With these and other measures, to be developed over the next few months in concert with the provinces, we will build on the progress made in the last budget to address the increasing cost of post-secondary education and the resulting debt burden on students.

When I was young, pursuing my education meant that I had to leave home for boarding school. Small communities lacked the resources to support institutions of higher education. What is wonderful about modern technology is the way the most remote communities can be in touch with our greatest institutions. SchoolNet, developed by our Department of Industry, allows schools to deliver the same information at the same time in Whitehorse and Weyburn, Victoria and Victoriaville. Bill Gates has said that SchoolNet is "the leading programme in the world in terms of letting kids get out and use computers". And we know that we can, and must, do even more.

As I travelled through Canada during the last four years, I saw how new technologies are strengthening rural Canada. We promised in our election programme that we would help rural Canada share new technologies and we will keep that promise. It is tremendously important to know that our great country with its millions of square kilometres will be the most connected country in the world by the millennium. Distances will matter much less; and

we will see the differences need not divide. The promise of technology is astonishing but technology must have a soul.

It was very troubling to read a survey this summer that suggested that young Canadians knew too little about each other and what we have done together. According to the survey, in every province except Quebec, more Canadians thought Neil Armstrong was the first Canadian in space rather than Marc Garneau. Only 28 per cent of Quebec youth could name John A. Macdonald as our first prime minister, although 78 per cent of them could name Wilfrid Laurier as the first Francophone prime minister. Too often we forget, or do not know, what we have achieved together. It is unacceptable that our youth may know all about computers but so little about their country.

[*English*]

At one level, this is why our future youth programs will emphasize exchanges. I never knew Canada until I sat at kitchen tables in Saskatchewan, skied in the Rockies, walked on the tundra in the Arctic, played pool on Fogo Island in Newfoundland, and talked with aboriginal elders around fires.

Similarly, Canada touches my heart and affects my thoughts as I discover the grandeur of our history. It moves me deeply to learn that over 150 years ago, when religion and race caused wars everywhere else in the world, here in Canada Robert Baldwin resigned his seat in the Parliament of the United Canada's so that his colleague, Louis Hippolyte Lafontaine, could run in a seat in the heart of English Canada.

Lafontaine became the francophone Catholic member for a thoroughly English and Protestant riding. Working together, Baldwin and Lafontaine brought us responsible government.

• (1640)

How many young Canadians know that just over a century ago as religious quarrels engulfed the world, Canada, a country with a large Protestant and British majority, elected its first francophone Catholic Prime Minister? It had the good sense to re-elect Laurier for three more terms, a reasonable goal for any prime minister, it seems to me.

We must find ways for young Canadians to learn what they share, to know what we have done and to gain pride in their nation's accomplishments. The Government of Canada will work with our great museums, other federal and provincial institutions and with voluntary groups to develop ways to increase Canadians' knowledge of what we have done together.

We Canadians have built together an astonishing country, respected, even envied throughout the world. This fall more than 100 nations will come to Ottawa to sign a treaty banning forever the use of anti-personnel landmines. I am proud that it was an initiative

taken by this government in 1994. I am very proud too that my government, through the foreign minister, refused to accept a second best treaty. The foreign minister deserves our congratulations for a job well done.

We worked with others of like mind and showed that Canada can make a real difference in the world. At one of the international meetings I recently attended, a world leader told me that only Canada could have been the leader in the campaign against landmines. I most strongly agree with the recent comment of the opposition member for Esquimalt—Saanich, a medical doctor who has seen landmines tear apart human bodies and who has worked with us to achieve the ban. He told reporters that the landmine treaty marks the “the onset of a new era in Canadian foreign policy using our moral force for humanitarian purposes. This treaty,” he said, “will save tens of thousands of lives”.

That moral force comes from what we are, what we have done together and what values we share in common. Canadians expressed that spirit nationally during the Saguenay and Manitoba floods. As we stood at the dikes and watched the raging waters we shared the experience as Canadians.

My government feels the burden of that moral force in all that we do. That is why we will take a very broad approach to promoting and strengthening our unity. When we seek to realize the highest aspiration of Canadians we help make Canada more united.

[*Translation*]

I welcome the Calgary initiative of the premiers and territorial leaders. It is a positive and constructive statement and affirmation of important values about what Canada is, and what makes us Canadian.

• (1645)

It contains a key message. The French fact is a fundamental part of our Canadian identity, and as such the unique character of Quebec society with its French-speaking majority, its culture and civil law tradition, is fundamental to the well-being of Canada. The French fact is an essential part of my identity, one that has nurtured me, one that has given me strength and identity, one that has made me the Canadian I am.

I welcome the commitment of the Premiers and Territorial Leaders to involve the people in their provinces and territories in strengthening the unity of this country by joining in giving voice to these values.

The message to Quebecers, to all French-speaking Canadians, indeed to all Canadians, is one of openness and solidarity. It is a message that should be heard.

I welcome the very constructive approach that the leaders of the Reform Party, the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party are taking on this issue.

The Address

I urge Quebecers to hear the message coming from Calgary and to join in building on it. The words from Calgary should be taken for what they are, an inclusive and timely message for all to hear. It is an important step in building understanding and confidence. Nothing more should be read into it.

Since this is not a constitutional or legal text, I would urge Canadians not to be drawn into a legalistic analysis of a statement of values. The day may come—I hope it will, and it will if Quebec ever has a government willing to work for those Quebecers who wish to remain a part of Canada, and they are the majority—when there is a legal and constitutional text to consider as such. The words from Calgary are an attempt to express worthy Canadian values and that is how they should be welcomed.

I pledge to all Canadians that we are open to all good ideas to strengthen the unity of our country. We invite the ideas of all opposition parties, and we will have an opportunity to discuss them either in this House or in committee. But we will never be hostage to demands that diminish or deny to each and every Canadian the benefits of his or her citizenship and our nationhood, our existence as an independent nation recognized by the UN.

We will continue to be frank and open about the consequences of what those who seek to partition Canada are proposing. Clarity does not cause fear, it is the enemy of fear. Our adversary is confusion. I am convinced that when things are clear, Quebecers and other Canadians will choose to stay together because it is the best choice for them and their children. As I have emphasized today, we are committed to collaboration and partnership with all those who, in good faith, will work with us to realize the wonderful opportunities that await Canada and Canadians.

Our strength, our character and our recent successes have positioned us to pursue those opportunities in new ways to meet new challenges of a new century.

• (1650)

[*English*]

We began this century as a small nation, without a flag, without our own Canadian citizenship and even without Newfoundland. Alberta and Saskatchewan were not yet provinces. The slums of Montreal and Halifax had a high rate of infant mortality than do the modern slums of Calcutta where Mother Teresa toiled.

Few Canadians even met others more than 50 miles away. On the prairies new settlers lived in isolation throughout cold winters, unaware of the petroleum riches beneath them. And yet we knew we had a future.

At the beginning of the century Laurier dreamed of that future when he said:

Three years ago when in England, I visited one of those models of Gothic architecture—The cathedral was made of granite, oak and marble. It is the image of the nation I wish to become. For here, I want the granite to remain granite, the oak to

The Address

remain oak, the marble to remain marble. Out of these elements I would build a nation great among the nations of the world.

We have built that nation and we continue to shape its elements. Our young will do so in the next century. Their architecture will be new but it will be Canadian. Greatness may have a different meaning but it will be Canadian.

Today there is in Canada once again a wonderful sense of a country moving, of a country that matters, of a country that dreams again. For a long time for too many Canadians Canada has seemed stuck. Now everywhere Canadians together are making choices for a new millennium.

I pledge to Canadians that this Parliament and this government will be worthy of their dreams and their aspirations. With every ounce of energy we have, with the support of our colleagues and our fellow Canadians, we will keep this wonderful country, this Canada, our Canada, united. Together we will move into the next millennium as a prosperous, tolerant, generous, caring and modern country.

This country will be a model to the world. We are all very privileged to be members of this Parliament. People see Canada as the country to look at. When we travel around the world we realize that we are the envy of the world. Millions and millions of human beings around the world would give their last penny to share this citizenship of ours. That is why we have the collective duty to work together to make this country even greater and to give the best country in the world to our children and our grandchildren.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, may I begin by congratulating you on your election as Speaker. I wish to assure you that, in this House, the Bloc Québécois will always behave with the greatest respect for this institution, just as we have in the past.

After the last election, we find ourselves in a fragmented Parliament, a Parliament reflecting the true face of Canada. The Bloc Québécois finds itself as the principal Quebec party, the main voice for Quebec in Ottawa. Forty-four members, constituting the majority of the Quebec deputation, 60 percent of the deputation in fact, that is what the Bloc Québécois represents.

Indeed, speaking of the true face of Canada, we had an eloquent example yesterday in the Speech from the Throne. Two main conclusions can be drawn from the intentions of the Liberal government.

The first is no surprise: continuation of Plan B, the hard line with Quebec. I will return to this point later.

A second conclusion must also be reached: after going after the deficit at the expense of the unemployed and the most disadvantaged members of society, by hacking savagely at transfer payments to the provinces for health and education and at unemployment insurance, now this government has the gall, the indecency, to make use of the surpluses generated by its own cutbacks to interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

Clearly, the aim is political visibility rather than efficiency for the public. With this objective, this second conclusion falls in line with our first one.

The cuts to unemployment insurance, the cuts to social assistance imposed on the provinces and the reductions in health and education transfers occasioned by this government's deficit reduction have wreaked havoc in the lives of thousands of Canadians.

Rather than repair the damage it has done, the government is concerned with only one thing. It wants to use the money it saved to increase its profile for purely political purposes.

If I had to summarize the speech on government policy, I would say that the word is federalism in capital letters.

In its speech, the government is inviting us to take part in a great debate on the post zero deficit age. The Liberals are proposing that half the surplus go to paying the debt and to reducing taxes. The other half would go to misusing its spending power in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

Having been the cause of many social ills, the government now wants to set itself up as the saviour. It will have cut \$42 billion from social programs, health care, education and social assistance, thus forcing the closure of hospitals, driving thousands of workers denied unemployment insurance toward welfare and causing massive cuts in schools.

The surpluses that will be generated after the deficit is eliminated should not be used for federalist propaganda, but should go directly to reinstating the transfer payments made to the provinces for social programs. Specifically, this would mean more money for hospitals and CLSCs. It would also mean more teachers and student services.

Secondly, surpluses should go to job creation through a targeted reduction in payroll taxes. In its electoral platform, the Bloc proposed that the employment insurance fund surplus be used to lower employment insurance premiums by at least 35% and to re-invest \$2.5 billion in improving assistance to the unemployed, including the seasonally unemployed.

• (1700)

Not returning the annual surplus of approximately \$7 billion in the employment insurance fund, and not telling workers and the unemployed about this surplus, is a clear misappropriation of

The Address

funds. The suggestions I am now making had the agreement of the premiers in St. Andrews recently.

Next, the surpluses must be used in the fight against poverty. And this includes improving the employment insurance system, given the deep cuts made over the last five years, particularly in benefits to seasonal workers.

Finally, there is the long overdue \$2 billion in compensation paid to the Maritimes but not to Quebec for harmonizing the GST, one of the demands from Quebec that was also supported by all premiers at the St. Andrews meeting. And only after it has fulfilled these obligations should the federal government think about lowering taxes or reducing the debt.

But instead of repairing the damage caused by its policies, the government announces that it will now use this breathing room to systematically interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction. The worst interference ever seen in the history of Canada. Even Pierre Elliott Trudeau never dared to go this far. And that's saying something.

The government is confirming its interference in the health field by creating a pharmacare plan, when Quebec already has its own such plan.

Moreover, after taking over 30 years to partially withdraw from the manpower training sector, this same federal government is now seeking, six months later, to maintain, confirm and increase its involvement in youth training.

One the very few new things mentioned in this speech is that the federal government will now get directly involved in education, in order to, and I quote: "measure the readiness of Canadian children to learn", through an innocuous leaflet sent to every home. And then are we going to have national standards in the education sector? Are we going to have national exams in that sector?

I say we will never let the federal government get involved in Quebec's schools. Never.

However, these measures and policies are just part of a more global strategy designed to achieve the first objective that we pointed out, namely to pursue more aggressively than ever the government's plan B. This is the logical consequence of the last election, when we witnessed repeated attacks against Quebec, its politicians and its democratic institutions.

The prevailing ideology in the rest of Canada is getting further than ever from Quebec's traditional demands and aspirations. Such hardening is being promoted in an irresponsible fashion by the comments of the Reform Party, by the actions of the Liberal Party of Canada, and by the collusive silence of the leader of the Conservative Party. As for the NDP, it has always ignored the Quebec issue, and in fact this is why Quebecers have always ignored the NDP.

Slowly but surely, through the use of psychological profiles, changing democratic rules, hate-filled Internet sites and the promotion of partition, public opinion in the rest of Canada is falling into collective beliefs that still smack of colonialism as regards Quebec, in that they view us merely as a quaint entity.

This attitude is obvious in the government's throne speech. Never before, in a Speech from the Throne, has a government so directly threatened Quebec's right to decide on its own future.

Moreover, the Liberal government is dropping the solemn commitment made after the referendum to recognize Quebec as a distinct society, after putting it in a motion passed by the House of Commons, and after repeating it in the form of an election promise in its second red book.

• (1705)

Further watering down recognition of the Quebec people, this government has embraced the definition in the Calgary declaration, referring to the "unique character of Quebec society", as unique as B.C. salmon, and without constitutional amendments.

If we carefully examine this agreement, it is easy to understand why the Prime Minister and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs were so enthusiastic. This is the worst it has ever been for Quebec. Several experts agree it is far less than Meech and even less than Charlottetown.

The federalists were rather quick to applaud the results of a recent survey on this agreement. They should not get carried away, because as Quebecers become better acquainted with the contents of this agreement, their support will be affected accordingly. In the rest of Canada, we already hear people saying that Quebec has been given too much. There is a very real possibility it will be Charlottetown all over again.

The only message sent to Quebec in this throne speech is that we should be satisfied with Canada as served up in Calgary, otherwise it will be Plan B.

All in the defence of national unity, the government even has the nerve to emphasize the bilingual character of this country, when the facts tell a different story altogether. They show a shocking rate of assimilation among francophones outside Quebec, a national Constitution that since 1982 has never been translated into French, and a few weeks ago, the closing, to all intents and purposes, of the only francophone hospital in Ontario, the Montfort. That is Canada's bilingual character.

[English]

I have only a few words for the rest of Canada about the premiers meeting which was held in Calgary. Forget the Calgary deal, it will never pass Quebec.

The Address

[Translation]

The Bloc Québécois has never deviated from its basic principles. Now more than ever, we deem sovereignty to be necessary. The constitutional impasse is still there, even more so since the Calgary declaration. The main purpose of the Bloc Québécois is clear: to advance the sovereigntist project while staunchly defending Quebec's interests.

During this next mandate, defending Quebec's interests will have to involve defending Quebec's democratic institutions. When we came to Ottawa, we knew it would be hard, that harsh words would be exchanged. Yet we would never have dreamed that we would have to defend democracy, we would never have dreamed that the federal government would stoop so low as to question the very foundations of democracy.

This best country in the world is behaving like an imperial power looking down its nose at its ignorant colony, which dared to get just a little too uppity on the evening of October 30, 1995. A colony which no doubt needs psychoanalysis, I suppose, as the hon. member for Don Valley West so clearly demonstrated to us with his pseudo-psychoanalysis of the Premier of Quebec. Some might also add that the people who voted yes did not know what they were doing, while everything was perfectly clear to those who voted no.

Yet the rules governing the last two referendums were accepted by all parties, including the federal government. A federal government which, let us recall, accepted Newfoundland into Confederation with a close vote in a second referendum. Casting doubt on those rules now indicates obvious bad faith and, in particular, a profound disdain for the near-victory of the yes side in the last referendum.

Let us look a little closer at the rules the Prime Minister is trying to discredit with the help of his hatchet man, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

In Quebec, all of the province's political leaders agree on the rules governing Quebec's move to sovereignty. There is clearly a consensus in Quebec on this, which the federal government is refusing to recognize.

This consensus is grounded on three basic principles: first, the existence of the people of Quebec; next, respect for fundamental democratic principles; finally, the integrity of Quebec territory. All of Quebec's premiers, be they federalist or sovereigntist, from Daniel Johnson senior to Robert Bourassa, have defended these three principles.

• (1710)

The federalists, in their post-referendum panic and without an argument to stand on, are going after the process, trying to discredit it by all possible means. By doing so, however, they are the ones discrediting democracy in Canada by deriding the rules underlying

it. Partition, a reference to the Supreme Court, doubt cast on the rule of the simple majority, a country wide referendum, all threats and fears are fair game.

Under the tutelage of the Reform Party, the Liberal Party of Canada has chosen not to face the issue. Everything is being questioned with the almost acknowledged aim of frightening Quebecers and with the obvious aim of saying, "You will never do it". The bidding is escalating at the expense of Quebecers.

Although they are not acceptable, these attacks against Quebec's democratic institutions are not the real problem. Although they are irresponsible and dangerous, the threats of the partition and hacking-up of Quebec are not the real problem. Although it is both absurd and disgusting, the reference to the Supreme Court aimed at depriving Quebecers of their right to decide their future democratically is not the real problem.

The real problem is this stubborn denial of the very existence of the people of Quebec. This is the real problem, which in turn leads to all sorts of undemocratic excesses cloaked in legality and clarity. Such hypocrisy. This is the root cause of the deadlock. The Liberal Party of Canada's approach has failed, because it denies the existence of the people of Quebec people, a people different from the people of Canada.

By so doing, the big guns in the federalist camp are endorsing the position of the leader of the official opposition, who stubbornly denies the existence of the people of Quebec as one of the two founding nations of Canada in 1867.

Canadians are a people. The aboriginal peoples are made up of several peoples. People all over the world are divided into various peoples. If it is good for everybody else, why would it be bad for Quebecers?

I appeal specifically to members from Quebec in this House who, over and above their mandate, are citizens who must believe in respecting democracy and above all in the existence of the people of Quebec.

We urge you not to be part of the government's blind denial of the facts when it refuses to recognize that the people of Quebec people exists and is free to decide its own future.

To conclude, let me say a word or two about Canada's future. In its Speech from the Throne, the government is predicting a brilliant future for Canada during the third millennium. It even invites us to celebrate this future success ahead of time. We see things differently.

We believe that Canada is at a crossroad. It has a choice. The federal government can remain true to its traditions of tolerance, openmindedness and democracy, traditions upheld by Lester B. Pearson, among others. Then, the government will give Quebec the right to decide its own future in accordance with the democratic

The Address

rules which are part of the common heritage of the peoples of Canada and Quebec.

Thus, it will become once again a model at the international level, with which a sovereign Quebec will be able to build a real partnership. Not a pseudo-partnership where Quebec would simply carry out orders from Ottawa, but a fruitful partnership between two sovereign countries. This is simply reasonable, this is plain common sense.

Or the government can let itself go and drift away from democracy, this has already started, driven mostly by the anti-sovereignist phobia of the Prime Minister and his Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. And this is the open door to all excesses, a slide towards anger and intolerance, towards totally anti-democratic behaviour. This is a dead end street.

Unfortunately, it is this second alternative which seems to prevail at the present time, because of a Prime Minister who is blinded and intoxicated by the arabesques and arrogance of his Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. This is regrettable, but I am deeply convinced that in the end the Canadian people, whom I sincerely trust, will not allow it. The government will have to pay a heavy price for having defiled its own institutions.

• (1715)

Members of the Bloc Québécois will continue to stand by the democratic traditions of Lester B. Pearson's Canada. We will continue to respect this House despite the fact that many members on the government side try to defile it and use it for their own anti-sovereignist obsessions, as they are presently trying to do with the Supreme Court. Even if they continue to move down this dead end street, they will not prevent Quebec from progressing toward sovereignty. I do hope that Quebecers will have their own country by the year 2000.

In concluding, I move:

That the amendment be modified by adding after the words "legislative program" the following:

"that denies the existence of the Québécois people and their culture, which once again reflects the government's centralizing vision by confirming and increasing its presence in areas of provincial jurisdiction such as social programs, health and especially education, and".

The Speaker: The amendment is in order. We now have a few minutes for questions and comments. If there are questions and comments, I will allow them; if not, we will move on.

As there are no questions or comments, I give the floor to the leader of the New Democratic Party, the hon. member for Halifax.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I rise in my place in this Chamber for the very first time I wish to

congratulate you, Sir, on your re-election to continue serving as Speaker among your 300 peers. It is an honour for sure but also a daunting task.

[*Translation*]

I also want to congratulate and thank the other candidates to the Chair.

[*English*]

I know, Mr. Speaker, that it is your job to create a respectful political climate and at the same time favourable working conditions for all members who are elected to serve the public interest in this great Parliament of Canada. I also know that it is the responsibility of the Speaker to attend to the working conditions for all of the employees who serve Parliament here on Parliament Hill and in the precincts in the surrounding area.

I must say that over the last year and a half as I have served as leader of the New Democratic Party without a seat in Parliament I have looked on with some frustration and some horror as I have watched the deteriorating conditions for some of the people who are serving us here on Parliament Hill. In particular, I have felt a great deal of consternation at the spectacle of hundreds of locked out security guards.

• (1720)

Mr. Speaker, I know that it is not because you failed to exercise your duties but rather the government has been willing to not only tolerate but actually sponsor first the training and then the hiring of replacement workers who have replaced workers earning barely above minimum wage and who are coming up to a one year anniversary of the time when they were locked out from their jobs here on Parliament Hill.

I hope it is a sign of better times to come that there is some indication those security guards are now looking at a tentative agreement. I hope that as we come up to the one year anniversary of that lockout we will instead be celebrating a just settlement on behalf of those workers and their families.

I am delighted today to finally be taking my seat in the House of Commons and I am delighted to be surrounded by some 20 New Democrat colleagues. It is certainly true that three quarters of the NDP caucus are rookies, I among them, at least newcomers to this Chamber. Mr. Speaker, for that reason we will be looking to you frequently for guidance and counsel. I hope we can expect a little patience as we learn the rules and the procedures of the House.

As I look across the floor this afternoon I am very aware that someone very dear and very special is missing. He was someone special not only to New Democrats but to all parliamentarians present and past. I am sad that Stanley Knowles did not live to see this day, that he did not live to see the official return to the House of

The Address

Commons of the party which he helped to found. It is a bittersweet celebration for us today.

Many of us learned of Stanley's death as we were arriving in Ottawa for our first caucus meeting in June. We will all miss Stanley Knowles greatly, his warmth, his humour, his fierce unyielding dedication to justice and equality and his unparalleled expertise in the rules and procedures that govern Parliament.

We all remember Stanley's lifelong battle for decent pensions for working people. Stanley would never have been fooled by euphemisms like seniors benefits into believing that a massive reduction in pension benefits was an improvement. We pledge today to honour Stanley's memory by fighting any further erosion of pension protection for our seniors. On this occasion I give thanks for the tremendous contribution that Stanley Knowles made to the House of Commons, to my party and to the people of Canada.

On the day of Stanley Knowles' funeral, a close long time friend of his arrived at my office. He brought me two publications that were co-authored by Stanley and by my father who came to work in Ottawa as the first researcher for the CCF caucus in the early 1940s. Those publications talked about a more democratic Canada.

For me it is a humbling experience and I admit an emotional occasion to take my place in the House of Commons, to continue that struggle for a more democratic and a more social democratic Canada. I was born in Ottawa because of my parents' decision to come here and be part of that social democratic movement. But of course Halifax is where I have spent most of my life and Halifax is the riding I have the privilege to represent here in the Parliament of Canada. Let me take a moment or two to tell the House a bit about my riding of Halifax.

● (1725)

Halifax is often said to be something of a bell-wether riding. I must say I never really quite believed that until the June 2 election. But when all four Halifax area federal ridings elected New Democrats to represent them in this session of Parliament, I knew that Halifax was a bell-wether riding.

Halifax is a growing modern metropolis and yet it is still characterized by the generosity and the openness of a small farming town or a fishing outpost. Our maritime traditions are well known; the courage of our military men and women serving overseas, the resourcefulness of our current armed forces and civilian personnel rising to new challenges.

Less well known perhaps is our rich cultural ethnic diversity in Halifax and Nova Scotia generally. We are rediscovering and reclaiming the history of Nova Scotia's aboriginal people, the Micmac, our black population, the proud community that was Africville, our Acadian communities and their valiant struggle to maintain their language and their culture, the many other peoples

who have entered Canada through the port of Halifax, many of them through pier 21, some settling in Halifax and many others moving on, all of them choosing Canada as their home.

That diversity I am pleased to say is very much reflected in the caucus that I have the privilege to lead in this Parliament.

[Translation]

It includes, for instance, the first Acadians in a New Democratic caucus as well as an aboriginal member from the Prairies.

[English]

We have the first Afro-Canadian member of Parliament elected from Atlantic Canada, several members from recent immigrant families and, I would add, the most women ever elected to the New Democrat caucus. My predecessor, the member for Yukon, served in the House with dignity and devotion under much more difficult circumstances, outnumbered by her caucus colleagues eight to one. I guess it can be said that the only caucus that has ever come close to being gender balanced in Parliament is the past Conservative caucus. I do not know anybody who is recommending that formula for gender balance.

In recent years Canadians have watched my province of Nova Scotia spawn an explosion of cultural expression and cultural achievement, Acadian and Celtic music, Scottish dance, Atlantic humour—who among us does not both love and fear “This Hour has 22 Minutes”—our vibrant visual arts, award winning film making, dynamic theatre and outstanding playwrights like my colleague, the member for Dartmouth, and amazing authors like Anne-Marie Macdonald, one of Cape Breton's finest, author of the epic novel *Fall on Your Knees*. Permit me to quote briefly a favourite passage: “There is nothing so congenial to lucid thought as a clear view of the sea. It airs the mind, tunes the nerves and scours the soul”. Maybe the inspiration of the ocean explains the eruption of self-discovery in Atlantic Canada these days. Now this quiet Atlantic revolution is sending shock waves through the world of politics.

● (1730)

My colleagues and I are well aware that we have an enormous responsibility, a mandate born out of suffering and out of hope. I want to say to my constituents and to all Canadians, Atlantic Canadians, today that we will not let them down in the coming Parliament.

Canadians understand what this throne speech has so callously ignored, that something has gone desperately wrong for far too many Canadians with jobs being wiped out, the quality of life being eroded, medicare and education crumbling, national institutions like the CBC under siege, tax subsidies for business luncheons but new tax burdens for family necessities, and new threats to our

national sovereignty from the multilateral agreement on investment.

It is gratifying to see provincial and territorial leaders commit to the unity initiative announced earlier this month in Calgary, but let me also say that Canada is bigger than any constitution. Far more crucial than any notion of equality among the provinces is the fundamental equality of Canadians, Canadians as citizens, equality before the law, equality of services, equality of opportunity. Worsening our inequalities can only gladden the hearts of those who seek to divide us.

[*Translation*]

In order to capture the hearts and minds of the people of Quebec, we must prove that Canada can work well once again, that Canada can once again become a country where economic security, sound communities, interesting opportunities and real human charity prevail.

This Parliament must focus on rebuilding that kind of Canada. Otherwise, the next Parliament may very well represent a much smaller and a much sadder Canada.

[*English*]

If this government is willing to tackle the whole question of unity instead of focusing on the narrow agenda of those who would divide us then we will work with it for the shared goals of compassion, community and unity; but that requires that this government do some serious rethinking and requires a new commitment to the real priorities of Canadians.

We promised in the election campaign that not a week would go by in the House of Commons without New Democrat MPs fighting for Canadians pressing priority, especially for jobs. I only wish that the prime minister would devote as much attention to the creation of jobs as he devotes to the creation of senators.

Let us examine the facts: 82 consecutive months with unemployment above 9 per cent, 82 consecutive months with 1.4 million children living in poverty, unemployment insurance protection dropping below the level of the state of Alabama creating immense hardship while the unemployment insurance fund runs a huge and growing surplus, and those with jobs dogged by constant insecurity in an increasingly part time, low wage, no benefit economy.

• (1735)

Women are the most vulnerable. It is no surprise that this government has abandoned women. The first 1993 red book promise broken was that of a national child care program. Canadian families and Canada's children are still waiting.

Let us look at how this government treats its own women employees. The government is still refusing to honour the \$2 billion pay equity debt owing to 80,000 women in this country.

The Address

Aboriginal communities across the country are desperate for economic development and jobs while this government stalls on the royal commission recommendations.

Twenty-five per cent real youth unemployment is eating away at our country's future. Canadians have heard lots of lofty Liberal promises, but the fact is that there are 20,000 more youth unemployed today than this time last year.

The program reannounced in yesterday's throne speech will not make a dent for the 410,000 unemployed youth.

[*Translation*]

A whole generation of our young people finish their studies without being rewarded with a decent job offer and find themselves strapped with a huge debt, \$25,000 on average.

[*English*]

What is really happening with medicare? The good news is that two tier health care is no longer a threat in this country, and the bad news is that two tier is already a reality brought to us by the finance minister's massive cuts, cuts in no way reversed by yesterday's hollow pronouncements.

Who bears the brunt? Families struggling with illness and, most of all, once again women: the backbone of the health care workforce reduced to casual workers with homemakers and volunteers forced to take up the slack as services are slashed.

With people suffering, with families struggling, with patients' lives on the line, why is there any debate over what to do with the fiscal dividend?

New Democrats will be relentless in fighting for a real commitment to move medicare forward, not vague platitudes but a solid commitment to comprehensive home care, a prescription drug program and the unequivocal rejection of two tier American style health care.

Where is this government on the environment? The short answer judging by yesterday's throne speech is nowhere. Canada's most endangered species is a federal Liberal politician willing to take any responsibility to protect our natural environment.

I want to be fair. There is one solid government achievement that we all celebrate. I want to give credit where it is due. Canada has played a pivotal role in the resolve to eliminate global stocks of landmines.

I trust the government will have the humility to acknowledge the work of so many Canadians whose pressure on our own government and others laid the foundation for this important success. I know all parliamentarians will join me in underlining the singular contribution made to Canada's effort by the late Diana, Princess of Wales.

The Address

The treaty to be signed here in Ottawa will serve as a fitting tribute to her legacy and her memory. Every Canadian can be proud of this achievement. I pledge today my party's support to further the goals of that treaty and rid the world of all inhumane weapons of war.

The Speaker: I know the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party is just wrapping up.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Speaker, I might ask unanimous consent to make my concluding comments. I appreciate and respect the time limits.

These are the values of my party and they are the values that we will fight for in the coming Parliament, giving our children the best possible start in life, education and job opportunities for our young, decent pensions for our seniors, medicare for all and poverty for none, a healthy environment for future generations and strong safe thriving communities.

• (1740)

Anyone who doubts the strength of the community spirit in Canada has only to remember the floods which took such a terrible toll in the Saguenay last summer and in southern Manitoba this spring, to remember the sense of common purpose within these communities and the sense of solidarity which swept our nation in an outpouring of compassion and co-operation.

My caucus invites this government to honour that spirit, to learn from it and to unleash it to build the country we all know Canada can be.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, this reminds me of my first day of return to the House. I sat here and said to myself "I am surrounded, surrounded by Progressive Conservatives". What a contrast with the last legislature.

We are very happy to be back in this legislature and in this Parliament and to find the voice we had lost in the last few years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like offer you my heartiest congratulations, not only on my behalf but also on behalf of my caucus, the Progressive-Conservative Party. I also want to assure you once again of our co-operation in the performance of your duties, which hold such importance for the operation of the House.

I would also like to congratulate the leaders of the other parties who were re-elected in their ridings and who will have the opportunity to cross swords with all the members in this Parliament.

I would also like to congratulate all those who were elected or re-elected, especially the new members who are here for the first time and who are about to experience something extraordinary.

I would be remiss if I did not seize this opportunity to thank, from the bottom of my heart, the constituents of Sherbrooke, Fleurimont and Lennoxville who have re-elected me for the fourth time. I must tell you I owe these people a great deal. They are remarkable. I have had the privilege of representing them for many years now. I am trying—with some success, I believe—to give a true picture of what they are; they in turn illustrate quite well what I represent.

To those people I want to reiterate my sincerest thanks and I want to confirm that I intend to serve them with the utmost dedication and energy.

[*English*]

An election campaign is a moment for the country to stop, to reflect, to look back and hopefully to look forward. The last election campaign was an opportunity to do that. For me and for my party the last three and a half or four years have been very much about learning more about Canada, about exploring our possibilities and about going forward.

In the last two years and during the election campaign a number of things struck me about our country that are worth repeating today. Beyond the walls of this Parliament, beyond partisanship, beyond the rhetoric, there are a lot of good things to speak about in this country. There always was, by the way.

I want to take a second—and it may sound unusual to some members—to speak about our successes as a country in dealing with our deficits and debts.

A very powerful consensus exists in Canada for governments to balance their books and get their priorities right. There is so much consensus that we find New Democrats in Saskatchewan, Liberals in the Atlantic provinces, the Parti québécois in Quebec City and even, who would have thought, the federal Liberal Party of Canada have come around to the idea that we have to actually balance our books.

• (1745)

No matter how much they would like to redo history and say that everything was the fault of the previous government, that they had nothing to do with it, little do they mention, because their memory is selective, that they left behind when we came to government in 1984 a debt that had increased 1,000 per cent fold under the leadership of the Liberal government, including this Prime Minister. Their memory is so selective.

This is also a country that has done very well in the area of trade. Thank God we had trade agreements. Thank God we fought and won the election of 1988 and had the free trade agreement that allowed this country to increase merchandise export trade to the United States by 100 per cent.

We fought and signed the North American free trade agreement. Do they remember that the same people who now sit on the government benches fought us tooth and nail on the free trade agreement? What do we have today? We have a Prime Minister

The Address

bent on travelling outside the country to increase trade with new countries.

He is now bragging about his new amigos in Chile. He wants to sign deals with Argentina. He wants to sign deals with Israel. He cannot get enough of it. Yet they fought us every inch of the way.

The good news is that had it not been for these trade agreements that we signed, that we fought for, Canada would have had no growth in its economy. Our domestic economy has been on its back for the last four years. Canada's domestic economy under the leadership of this Prime Minister has been on its back. We would have been in a recession had it not been for the trade agreements which we signed and fought for in 1988 and 1993.

You have to appreciate the spectacle of the Prime Minister and the Liberal benches rising during question period to applaud the government on its brilliant record. Here is a government whose record will say that it has governed over the longest period of high unemployment in Canada, the 82nd month in a row of unemployment above 9 per cent, since the depression of the thirties. That is the record they were applauding this afternoon.

What is the record they are applauding? There are more poor children today in Canada than there were when this government was elected. What is the record of the Liberal government that its members all applauded? It is the record of a government that has left Canadians poorer today than they were in 1993.

The income of Canadians has gone down 1.3 per cent. Yet if we follow the reaction from the government benches, if we watch them as they get up and speak, if we listen to the Minister of Finance or even the Prime Minister, they will quote the numbers from the OECD "We are doing better than this country and that country". Maybe they should travel to Atlantic Canada. Maybe they should stay out of the OECD a little more, move away from Paris and Sweden or the Norwegian countries.

If they spent a little more time in Atlantic Canada and in western Canada they might find out why so few Canadians rise to applaud them when they speak of their record.

This is also a country that saw its health care and social spending slashed unilaterally, without consultation. This was unprecedented: a 40 per cent cut in funding. Was there any consultation?

By the way, where was all the talk of partnership back then, this great notion of rediscovered partnership?

During the election campaign the Liberals had to back down on health care because the health care system in this country is broken. The health care system in this country is suffering. The health care system in this country is threatened. It is threatened because of the actions of this government and this Prime Minister and failed

leadership. They are going to be held accountable in this Parliament for having done that.

• (1750)

The Speech from the Throne was the opportunity for the government to say to Canadians what it is about this new century, this new era that it cares about, that it wants to focus on. In fact, you will remember, Mr. Speaker, that we have had an election campaign—it was a first, a precedent, as far as I know—to allow the Prime Minister to write the Speech from the Throne. "I need the whole summer", he said. Why did the Prime Minister go to the polls three years into the mandate? Because he needed to write a Speech from the Throne. I do not know who wrote the Speech from the Throne, but I hope he was paid by the word and not the idea.

We could have expected a Canadian agenda. What did we get instead? The usual expressions of goodwill. How many times can we rediscover youth unemployment? Guess what, there are young Canadians out of work. Gee, why did we not think of that before? Speech after speech, and budget after budget gives us these useless, meaningless words, backed up by absolutely nothing, except a measure announced a few days ago, \$90 million for an internship program for 3,000 young Canadians.

About half a million young Canadians are out of work. I think it is more than 400,000. If a person has a young boy or girl out of work today, that person can tell them there is hope. At this rate in 136 years the Liberal government will actually help them find an internship. That is the great initiative of this Liberal government.

We expected the government to at least heed the message of the election campaign, to say "We have got it. We understand. We heard." There were many messages sent in the campaign. One of them at least the Prime Minister and I would agree on. He certainly did not return with the majority that he was hoping for. He certainly did not return with the vast support from all of the regions of the country.

[*Translation*]

If there is one thing the Prime Minister and the Liberal government must have understood, it is that they definitely did not get the mandate that they were hoping for and that they talked so much about at the beginning of the election campaign. So a message was sent to them.

We wonder however if that message was understood. Is there any indication in the throne speech that this government accepted and heeded the message sent by the Canadian people? I looked in the Speech from the Throne and I can only conclude that the answer is no. The government did not get it at all. We were expecting a national action plan, a plan that would set priorities and tell us how we would enter the new millennium.

The Address

What did we get instead? We heard from a government that wants to repent, a government that tells us it will reinvest money in certain programs. In which programs will the government reinvest? Can you believe that it will reinvest in health, after cutting spending in that sector by 35 per cent? It will reinvest in summer employment programs for students, after slashing them. It will reinvest in culture, after making cuts in that sector. And it will reinvest in post-secondary education, after reducing its support.

A few minutes ago, we witnessed something extraordinary. I was here in 1995. When the 1995 budget was tabled, the finance minister rose to announce that he would cut the scholarship program designed to encourage student excellence. This was in 1995. And do you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? I see the member for Rimouski, who was there as well, and the leader of the Bloc Quebecois. They all rose as they did this afternoon and applauded the Minister of Finance. This afternoon, the Prime Minister announced a new scholarship program. Guess what? They all rose together and applauded again.

That is what they did. But we did not applaud, because we were extremely sad to see such a good program being cancelled. What has changed in the meantime? Thousands of students have lost the financial support they needed to pursue their studies. Why? Because the government was shortsighted and unable to sort out its own priorities.

What has not changed is the docility of the Liberal backbenchers, who rise and applaud their Minister of Finance and their Prime Minister day after day.

• (1755)

This explains why there were 31 out of 32 from the Maritimes in the last Parliament. The people of the Atlantic provinces have said, "We've had enough of hearing the same old tune over and over, now we'd like to have people who will speak up for us, including the Progressive Conservative members in the Progressive Conservative caucus". They will speak up for the people of the Atlantic provinces, since silence has reigned in recent years.

This same government is now talking about reinvestments and partnerships. But if this government understands what true partnership means, what is it waiting for to form a partnership in the area of health, to co-manage our federation?

[English]

This government had an opportunity with health care to demonstrate that it really believed in partnership instead of acting unilaterally. There is still an opportunity. The government could still sit down with the provinces and agree to national standards in health care. Nowhere is it written in the Constitution that it has to be decided by Ottawa and enforced by Ottawa.

Let me share a secret with the Prime Minister. His position on health care is untenable. He cannot cut the provinces by 35 per cent and then sit at the same table and say to them "I will run the show". It is not going to work. The worst news is that it is not the Prime Minister's government or the provincial governments that will suffer. It is Canadians in waiting rooms, Canadians on waiting lists who are suffering from the Prime Minister's lack of leadership on this issue. They are paying the price.

We await the Prime Minister's partnership. We hope this time the words will be worth more than they were the last time they were spoken. The same is true for child poverty or youth policy. This Prime Minister invited us to give him some ideas on what we would do for young Canadians. I want to invite the Prime Minister today to look at the program, the platform we put forward in the last campaign.

We spoke of a youth policy with a clear objective where every young person should either be in school, in training, at work or doing community service. The national government can do something useful in that regard. You, sir, have the power to change the employment insurance system as it applies to young people. You do not have to ask anyone's permission. All you have to do is work with the provinces—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I know the hon. member is an experienced member. I know he intends to address his remarks to the Chair and I invite him to do so and to continue to do so.

Hon. Jean J. Charest: I would be more than happy to address my remarks to the Chair, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, the Prime Minister has an opportunity to do so. We hope he is sincere in his extending a hand for some advice. He can change the employment insurance system and pursue this policy. He does not need to get involved in areas of provincial jurisdiction. We should all recognize outright that education and training are provincial jurisdictions but the Prime Minister happens to have some control. In this Parliament control of EI is an important lever that has an impact on the decisions young people make in the area of education and training. The employment insurance system must be put at the service of the objectives we pursue in this area.

The same is true in regard to the issues as they affect aboriginal Canadians. I was happy to see at least in the Speech from the Throne an acknowledgement of the royal commission's report. I am far from agreeing with everything that is in that report but we cannot as a country remain in denial in dealing with what is going to be one of the most important issues of the next century, an issue that will test our values.

The most disappointing part is on jobs and on taxes. The government had an opportunity. This is a government that could have sent the signal that it has learned something about the last 30

years. But what has this Liberal government been saying to us now that we are facing the prospect of a surplus? It is saying that there is new money, that the promised land has arrived, that happy days are back again. The Prime Minister and his government say that they are going to spend that money because they have learned nothing from the last 30 years.

This government works on a few assumptions. The first assumption is that if there is a problem then the answer must be that government has to intervene. The second assumption is that if a government must intervene it has to be the federal government. "We're the ones who have to intervene, no one else". The third assumption is that if there is a problem we have to spend money. That is the Liberal philosophy. It is written nicely. I assume that it is written over the Prime Minister's door "If you send it we will spend it". That is the way it goes.

• (1800)

Let us talk to the real record of this government, the record the government was applauding this afternoon. The real country with which we compare is to the south of us. It is a quite imperfect comparison, but maybe the prime minister could explain to us why the unemployment rate in the United States is half what it is in Canada. Why is it that in the United States real disposable income has gone up 11 per cent in the last two years when it has gone down 1.6 per cent while the Liberals have been in power? Will they blame the Conservatives? Of course they will. If something goes wrong during the term of this government it is the fault of the past government.

However, if there is job creation, if the books are being balanced, if there are low interest rates and if there is low inflation it is all due to the Liberals, assuming that Canadians are dumb enough to buy all of that. I believe they will find that all of that wears very thin.

The government could have offered a different course to the country. With respect to taxes this government should not put up with the shameless rip off of employed Canadians, of the working poor in this country, who are being gouged because the government is using the employment insurance fund to pay down the deficit.

I asked the question in the House today yes or no, is the employment insurance fund of the government being used to reduce the deficit. I cannot get a straight answer. We know what the answer is. The government is paying down the deficit on the backs of workers, small businesses and on the backs of the unemployed, especially young unemployed Canadians. If the government wanted to do something today it could reduce premiums 25 per cent.

Are they listening? No, they are heckling. Maybe I am not convincing. Maybe I am too partisan. But do members think that

The Address

the Canadian Chambers of Commerce is too partisan? Do members think that le Conseil du patronat is too partisan? I do not think so. I hope the government will learn.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask that the hon. leader of the Conservative Party be afforded the same privilege which was afforded the leader of the New Democratic Party, that he be, by the unanimous consent of the House, permitted to finish his remarks.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member to complete his remarks?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Jean J. Charest: Mr. Speaker, the government speaks of taxes. It speaks of trade. There is all this talk of rebalancing the federation.

[*Translation*]

A new balance of responsibilities will be established in the federation. And no need to say that the leader of the official opposition wants a massive decentralization. However, there are areas where the powers of the national government must be strengthened because it is not by stripping the federal government of all its responsibilities that we will keep the country united.

[*English*]

If this government believes in the real rebalancing of the federation it would also speak to the areas where the national government should reinforce its powers. Believe it or not, this party of mine, the party which founded the country, the party of Sir John A. Macdonald, the party which was here through good and bad times, also knows that a strong central government in the areas in which it should be strong is the best bet in keeping this country together.

Again I will offer some advice to my colleague. If the government really believed in the strength of leadership it would offer some leadership on interprovincial trade. How is it that there is more freedom to trade between Canada and the United States and Canada and Mexico than there is between Manitoba and Nova Scotia? There is more freedom to trade between Ontario and Ohio than there is between Canadian provinces.

The prime minister is going to do another Team Canada trip in January. Can I make a humble suggestion to him. When he returns to Canada, why does he not get the premiers together and organize a Team Canada trip in Canada?

• (1805)

This government has the power to say to the provinces "we will give you a year to sit down with us and conclude an agreement for

The Address

interprovincial trade with a dispute settlement mechanism". Who would object to that? Surely not the government of the province of Quebec which in the 1995 referendum argued under the word partnership the value of the economic union of Canada. Surely not those who have signed on to trade agreements with dispute settlement mechanisms with the United States and Mexico. Why can we not have this for Canada and create jobs as we do it? That is also one of the compelling reasons why such leadership should be exercised. So here are a few of the ideas of things that we believe in.

In the area of health care we think this government needs to move very rapidly. We hope it will use the opportunity of the first ministers conference to propose a covenant in health care, to recognize that the agenda on health care in this country will not be a national agenda until the national government plays its role. It is fine to go out there and accuse the provinces of doing this or that. But they will be out there and Canadians will be in a period of uncertainty on health care until the national government offers real leadership, not denial. This includes recognition of national standards, a covenant in the area of health care, an agreement by the provinces to enforce those standards and also a dispute settlement mechanisms in the area of health care.

In education and training this government could lead the way by offering some leadership on testing in the sciences and math, wiring schools, doing everything in its power to offer access to post-secondary education which it seemed to say today. Frankly, excuse us if we are a little jaundiced, but we have heard the same words in the past and seen exactly the contrary.

Pension reform will also be very important. The prime minister will know that Canadians are very concerned, and they should be. The government has a hidden agenda. To put it very directly, it is proposing pension reform that is going to overwhelmingly affect middle class Canadians. Middle class Canadians are going to get whacked by the government. They are going to be affected. The people who saved for their retirements are now going to find out that these Liberal members are going to take that away from them.

We want the government to come clean. We are ready to debate it and prepare pension reform. But we want to know the truth. How will this affect single women? How will this affect married women who are in relationships where their income will be judged on family income, not their individual income? How will this affect decisions that Canadians are going to make in the future with regard to how they save? Will we have a system that will offer them incentives not to save but rather not plan at all because if they do the government will take their money away?

In the area of CPP we continue to support increases in premiums reluctantly. This is a payroll tax. But we equally believe that if there is going to be an increase in the premiums they must be offset by tax reductions. Otherwise we will end up with an \$11 billion or \$12 billion bite out of the economy.

[*Translation*]

Finally—but do not raise your hopes too high when I say finally, and it would go faster if I was not constantly interrupted, but I have plenty of time—I come to the unity issue. The Prime Minister probably read the letter I sent to the provincial premiers to explain the position of my party on the Canadian unity issue. It must be said that the Prime Minister knows that, for us, the national unity issue is not partisan. I think that we proved it in the 1995 referendum and after.

But what I would like most to share with the Prime Minister today is the need, the importance of leadership at the national level because it is one thing to ask provincial premiers to carry the ball, in the end, there is only one Prime Minister, only one national government and only one national Parliament. They cannot be replaced. We cannot expect the provincial premiers to act on behalf of a national government.

• (1810)

I would have hoped that we could turn the page on the post-Meech period and finally start building a national, a Canadian action plan. Until we agree at least on a common action plan, we will be at the mercy of a government in Quebec whose avowed intention is to break up Canada. And we only react to what it does.

The hope I place in this Parliament and in this government is that they come up with an action plan. Nobody expects that solutions will be found overnight. Nor does anyone expect any constitutional amendments. But what we want to see is the Prime Minister at least agreeing with the provincial premiers on a common plan of action.

I would caution, however, against a plan too heavily focused on Quebec, as it currently is following the Calgary declaration, and doomed to failure because demagogues elsewhere in the country are going to seize on this and once again say that Quebec is running the country, when in fact Quebecers do not wake up every morning wondering whether they are a distinct society. They do not have to ask themselves the question—they are a distinct society, period.

And while I am on the topic, they do not need anyone's permission to be distinct. Except that the redistribution of powers, the federal power to spend, and the new mechanisms for co-operation affect not only Quebecers and westerners but also people in the Atlantic provinces and in Ontario.

We will move forward if we can do so together. That is one of the lessons. There is no need to move heaven and earth. All that is necessary is an action plan with three or four priorities. The only person who can come up with that is the Prime Minister of the

The Address

country. But our Prime Minister, unfortunately, seems disinclined to act.

[*English*]

The prime minister will know that in the cabinet room in which he convenes his cabinet, as he sits down there is something written on the wall in front of him. The next time there is a cabinet meeting I hope he and his colleagues will take a second to read what is written there. It is from the book of proverbs: "Where there is no vision, the people perish". Fear of failure in this area of unity for Canada is not an excuse.

Plan Bs are nice but let me share with the prime minister that as far as this party is concerned they can pursue all the plan Bs they want, compete with the opposition leader in trying to be Canada's undertaker, but as far as this party is concerned and as far as Canada is concerned, failure is not an option and will never be an option.

We are happy and honoured to be in the House to offer our contribution to the national debate. We look forward to building, continuing to build what is a great country and offering our children even more than what our own parents left to us. That is the true test and will be the true test of this Parliament.

Of all the things a government can effect and decide on, one important symbol is a passport. If one stops a second to think about what we have accomplished together as Canadians through the last 130 years, from Sir John A. Macdonald to Laurier to yes, Diefenbaker, Mr. Trudeau, Mr. Mulroney, every government, the single accomplishment that symbolizes what we have done together is the value of the Canadian passport that we will pass on to our children.

Who would have thought 130 years ago when this country was founded that as a consequence of the work of these generations of men and women that we would pass on to our children today what is viewed as the most valuable passport in the world, in a world that is globalized, in a world where more than ever people travel—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. whip of the Reform Party on a point of order.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, when the leaders speak of course we do not want to be tight on time. We understand that the leader of the New Democrats went over by two or three minutes to conclude her remarks.

● (1815)

When the leader of the Conservative Party asked if he would have a couple or three minutes to do the same, we are now into doubling the time allotted for his speech. I think it is time to wrap it up. This has gone on now almost 15 or 20 minutes over the allotted period. I ask you to ask him to bring his remarks to a close.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has not raised a point of order. He is simply making a representation. The House extended the time and did not place a limit on the hon. member's time. I think the hon. member has expressed his view about what the extension should have been but in the circumstances, I recognize the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Hon. Jean J. Charest: Following the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, he could just leave if he wanted to. He does not have to sit and put up with this. I understand how difficult it must be for him to listen to all of this, but that is fine. I do not want to dwell on that. If he does not want to listen, he can just leave.

As I was saying, one of the great accomplishments of this country in this era of globalization, in this era where we as Canadians are more than ever present everywhere in the world, we are passing on to our kids this passport that is of great value. This is something that we, as a Parliament, have a very direct effect upon. I hope that everyone of us here will make a commitment, will inherit that passport and be able to benefit from what is one of the greatest citizenships in the world, being a Canadian.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, September 23, 1997, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 o'clock.

(The House adjourned at 6.17 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, September 24, 1997

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Monitor Jet Trainer Aircraft	
Mr. Wood	19
Chinese Canadians	
Mr. Mark	19
Whitby Warriors	
Ms. Longfield	19
National Defence	
Mrs. Venne	20
Plastimet	
Mr. Keyes	20
War Criminals	
Ms. Caplan	20
Mother Teresa	
Mr. Elley	20
Immigration	
Mr. Pillitteri	21
Algeria	
Mr. Turp	21
Speech from the Throne	
Ms. Jennings	21
Canadian Economy	
Mr. St-Julien	21
Pay Equity	
Ms. Vautour	21
Princess Diana	
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	22
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi	
Mr. Coderre	22
Canada Pension Plan	
Mrs. Wayne	22
Mother Teresa	
Ms. Guarnieri	22
The Speaker	23
ORAL QUESTION PERIOD	
Government Expenditures	
Mr. Manning	23
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	23
Mr. Manning	23
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	23
Mr. Manning	23
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	23
Employment	
Mr. Solberg	23
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	24
Mr. Solberg	24
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	24
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	24

Mr. Duceppe	24
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	24
Mr. Duceppe	24
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	24
Mr. Gauthier	24
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	25
Mr. Gauthier	25
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	25
Employment	
Ms. McDonough	25
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	25
Ms. McDonough	25
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	25
Mr. Charest	25
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	26
Mr. Charest	26
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	26
Throne Speech	
Miss Grey	26
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	26
Miss Grey	26
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	26
Mr. Brien	27
Mr. Dion	27
Mr. Brien	27
Mr. Pettigrew	27
National Unity	
Mr. Jaffer	27
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	27
Mr. Jaffer	27
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	28
Speech from the Throne	
Mr. Loubier	28
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	28
Mr. Loubier	28
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	28
Health Care	
Mr. Hill (MacLeod)	28
Mr. Rock	28
Mr. Hill (MacLeod)	28
Mr. Rock	29
Employment Insurance	
Mr. Crête	29
Mr. Pettigrew	29
Mr. Crête	29
Mr. Pettigrew	29
Immigration	
Mr. Provenzano	29
Mr. McWhinney	29
Fisheries	
Mr. Duncan	29
Mr. Anderson	30
Mr. Duncan	30
Mr. Anderson	30
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
Standing Orders	
The Speaker	30

Chief Electoral Officer of Canada	
The Speaker	30
Petitions	
Health and Drug Act	
Mr. Gouk	30
National Highways	
Mr. Finlay	30
Criminal Code	
Mr. Finlay	30
Co-Operatives	
Mr. Shepherd	30
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Adams	31
Motions for Papers	
Mr. Adams	31

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Speech from the Throne	
Resumption of debate on Address in Reply	
Mr. Manning	31
Mr. Manning	31
Motion	38
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	38
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	39
Mr. Duceppe	44
Amendment to the amendment	47
Mr. Charest	50
Mr. MacKay	53
Mr. Charest	53
Mr. Strahl	55
Mr. Charest	55

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation/Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste – lettre

**8801320
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:

Public Works and Government Services Canada — Publishing
45 Sacré-Coeur Boulevard,
Hull, Québec, Canada, K1A 0S9

En cas de non-livraison,

retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à:

Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada — Édition
45 boulevard Sacré-Coeur,
Hull, Québec, Canada, K1A 0S9

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:

Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique «Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire» à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

**Additional copies may be obtained from Public Works and Government Services Canada – Publishing,
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9, at \$1.75 per copy or \$286 per year.**

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.

**On peut obtenir la version française de cette publication en écrivant à Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada – Édition,
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9, à 1.75 \$ l'exemplaire ou 286 \$ par année.**