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other provinces and even every country in the world. This is part of our system.

We might also show that the problem of the debt has played a role in the development of Canada and Quebec. We enjoy a high quality of life. For the second consecutive year, the United Nations have declared Canada the country enjoying the best quality of life in the world. Talking about our financial problems, I hope the member will also acknowledge the fact that we have the best system and the highest quality of life in the world. Those things must be said. The Canadian experience has not been all negative. It has been good to us. The hon. member talks about interest rates. He wants me to talk about economy and finance.

When I arrived to Canada in 1958—my time has expired but I would like to have two more seconds—Montreal was the metropolis of Canada. All the large companies had their corporate offices in Montreal. The people across have been trying to separate Quebec from Canada for the last 30 years and during that time, Montreal has lost its title of metropolis. It has become the metropolis of poverty.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, a German federal minister was telling me the other day that after the war, when the allies decided to give Germany a new system of government, they opted for a federal system because it would give more flexibility to the various parts, provide a better balance between stronger regions and weaker ones, and also because it had worked particularly well in several countries, namely Switzerland, the United States and Canada.

Among all these countries, Canada is certainly the most decentralized. Having a very complex Constitution dating back to colonial times, it is a difficult country to govern. Certainly, Descartes would have concluded that the Canadian system of government is unpractical and that Canada, as is it, is impossible to govern.

The Canadian system defies the rationalism of constitutional and governmental concepts. The miracle is that—despite some frustrations and a scattered population over an immense territory, despite regional disparities that resist all our efforts, despite the formidable obstacles we are faced with every day—Canada has not only survived, but progressed in a unique way among world nations.

• (1235)

The descendants of the two founding peoples, who had fought each other in the past, have chosen against all odds to build a new country based on peace, fraternity and sharing.

[English]

The miracle of Canada is that it was born in peace. It has endured in peace inspired by a spirit of freedom, of justice and of tolerance. Indeed, viewed from afar, from the point of view of a stranger, our so-called quarrels, our so-called bickerings and debates, our verbal battles every day seem so picayune, so futile, so small.

Having had the chance over the years of listening to a number of citizens from various countries of the world, I know how surprised, indeed astounded, they are at our endless family debates. I see it in their eyes. I see it in their expressions. They view us as spoiled children who cannot appreciate the measure of our countless blessings and advantages.

We enjoy the special blessings of wide open spaces, the immensity and ever changing beauty of our landscapes and seascapes. We enjoy the quality of life only a rich and privileged country can offer. Above all, we share the valuable wealth of enduring values which have stood the test of time and common sacrifices: values of humility as a people, values of generosity within our community and toward others, a continuing ideal of social justice in spite of the inevitable hurdles of colour, of creed and of economic constraints.

The fabric of our values is enduring. It is firm. It is steady. The fibre of Canadian unity runs very deep. It may be quiet and understated but it is extremely strong.

[Translation]

Those who seek to destabilize Canada and to reject this common heritage bear an immense responsibility towards our fellow citizens. Sadly, I listen day after day to the laments of Bloc members who attack Canada and the federal system. All the ills that plague Quebec, so we heard earlier today, can be attributed to the federal system.

Independence will solve everything. This will be heaven on earth. Soon, it will be perfect bliss. The new independent Quebec will build the nirvana. Whoever sounds a warning, even an institution like the Bank of Montreal the other day, is reviled and there is a general outcry. Immediately, separatist forces call for a boycott by the people.

[English]

Those who would destroy the country, its heritage of values, its system of shared wealth, its balance of equity and fairness, hold a very deep responsibility to not only their fellow citizens in their own province but to all citizens of Canada. Inevitably separation and the risks of it, the recklessness of it, will not only bring economic hardship but will tear people apart within our communities, within Quebec; not only there, but province against province, destabilization of a wonderful country, the separation of the maritimes from Ontario, the geographical tearing apart of a country which has shared a wonderful destiny for nearly 13 decades.