

1972 and 1973. In any case, Mr. Speaker, I do not think these are words I would like to—

Some hon. Members: Well, go ahead.

Mr. Dupras: My colleagues are challenging me to repeat. I would rather not quote the words of the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle). His party favours decentralization, which means weakening the central power. Of course, once again, he cannot see through the scheme of his colleagues who are bent on curtailing the authority of the central government. Let me explain. Of course, if we could reduce the taxation power of the central government, this would benefit two provinces in particular: Alberta and Ontario. As a matter of fact, this would directly affect the equalization payments program. He does not realize that each time the leader and the hon. members of his party advocate decentralization and a reduction of federal powers, they are in fact talking about this program. The main reason why they want to take some of the taxation power away from the central government is to stop equalization payments not only for the province of Quebec, but also for the Atlantic provinces. He has not yet seen through his colleagues' guile and his leader's intention to cut down on the tax power of the central government.

An hon. Member: Which leader?

Mr. Dupras: Someone asks, "Which leader?"

An hon. Member: They do not have any.

Mr. Dupras: They may have two to date. There is one who refused to give unanimous consent yesterday so that we could all start campaigning and live up to the mandate Canadian voters gave us in 1974. His refusing unanimous consent is hard to understand. Does this mean the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) is apprehensive about the next campaign? Or is it his contention that the present government is doing so well now that its mandate should be extended? Those questions are worth asking. Anyway, in the Province of Quebec as in most of the other provinces, Canadians support this government. We had evidence of that. People appreciated the government's action when, for example, we introduced compensation payments for oil products, which allowed the Eastern consumers in Quebec, the Maritimes, the Atlantic provinces, the province of my hon. friend from St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), to buy oil at Canadian prices. And that does credit to the generosity and understanding of the people in Alberta. I say the same thing in the province of Quebec, Mr. Speaker. This is further evidence of the great benefits of Canadian confederation: a part of the country, a part of the population is willing to provide temporary assistance to another which does not enjoy similar economic benefits.

All the same, this program was first endorsed by the people in Alberta, by their government, to the benefit not only of the Atlantic provinces but of Quebec as well. The figures which were released this morning suggest that by the end of 1978, the province of Quebec will have received \$3 billion under the petroleum compensation program. That is quite an amount of

money which not only helped people who drive their children to school or to deliver the goods they manufacture but which has contributed to keep our industry competitive, the agri-food industry which is so sick in the province of Quebec and elsewhere, and all eastern industries which have enjoyed a Canadian price as well as the rest of the country.

There are also all the Quebec-Canada programs under which agreements have been entered into with the province of Quebec. I refer more often to the province of Quebec than to other provinces, because I am trying to make my colleague from Joliette (Mr. La Salle) aware of the advantages of the Canadian Confederation. First of all, he is not convinced of that and I would ask him to commend the generous policy of the Canadian government to his colleagues in his party. That is his weakest point. Indeed, he does not manage to uphold the generosity, the openness of mind shown by the Trudeau government for the economic development of the province of Quebec.

I said a few moments ago that agreements representing investments of \$200 or \$300 million for the province of Quebec have just been signed. These agreements provide for road construction, the creation of parks to stimulate the tourist industry and a set of other measures which I hope will help eradicate the unemployment that plagues mainly Quebec. One could have foreseen, Mr. Speaker, that following the election of a separatist party in 1976, unemployment would strike very hard in my province. No matter how much money the federal government may inject in industry and the public sector for job creation, if the provincial government does all it can, through ill-advised measures, to thwart economic development, there is not much we can do. It seems also that people are encouraged to refuse the kind of work only people from foreign countries, mainly the Caribbean islands, are prepared to do.

Also, Mr. Speaker, if the current slide of the Canadian dollar is deplored by several sectors of our economy, I know of some industries in my riding that are pleased with it. Of course, I would not say that the dollar must stay low or under the 90 cents level compared to the U.S. dollar. But I dare not think of the problems and the unemployment we would have if the Canadian dollar had not been devaluated. In fact, the dollar has not been devaluated, but was subject to the law of supply and demand, and the value of the dollar today, as the Prime Minister pointed out during the question period this morning, is based on the productivity and performance of the Canadian economy.

This allows Quebec industries, some in particular such as fine paper, to recover the markets lost during the strike in the fine paper industry in 1976. This also allows other industries to develop business in the U.S. and in Europe with the hope of retaining such business when the dollar regains its true value which, when compared to the U.S. dollar, is certainly not 100 cents to the dollar. But in the short term, Mr. Speaker, this had definite advantages for Canadian products in that it promotes our exports and job creation.