

Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order, please. I simply want to remind my colleagues on both sides of the House that all comments must be made through the chair and not directly, from one side of the floor to the other.

Mr. Patry: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this of the hon. member: If you have architects, if you have a plan, why wait? I would like to know when the Quebec government will decide to call a referendum with a simple and clear question.

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, you will understand that it is not up to me to answer that question and to say when the referendum will be held. It will be held when the Government of Quebec, which has the power to hold such a referendum under Quebec law, will decide to do so.

However, I would like to respond to my hon. colleague who suggested that our anger comes from our disappointment in the present Parti Québécois government. With all due respect, my colleague is mistaken. I want to tell him that we did not find ourselves with so many people on welfare and unemployed overnight and that the previous government, which was in office for nine years, had something to do with it.

I want to remind the member that as soon as the previous government led by Robert Bourassa came into office, it asked the central government to negotiate so that Quebec could regain powers in five areas in order to rejoin the constitutional fold. It thought it was important not only from a cultural standpoint, but also for the economy.

I want to remind the member that, for years, we had a federalist Liberal government, led by Mr. Bourassa, and a central government that wanted to help Quebec back into the Constitution because it had been imposed upon it even though that Constitution brought fundamental changes to the rules established at the time of Confederation in 1867. But Robert Bourassa saw the Meech Lake Accord fail because of whom? Because of the party that is now in office. We know, and it has been well documented in the newspapers and in many history books, that this party put pressure on some people, one of our honourable colleagues who shall remain nameless and the premier of Newfoundland, Clyde Wells, to get them to oppose this deal. And then the federalist Liberal Party of Quebec voted for the Allaire report, which left very few powers to the federal government.

What did it do after that? There was the Bélanger-Campeau commission, and then it adopted a bill, Bill 150, saying that it would hold a referendum if it did not get satisfactory offers, which we know never came.

• (1610)

Despite all that, a referendum was held and, as we all remember, the Charlottetown agreement was rejected in Quebec

because it was not enough and in the rest of Canada because it was too much. Now we are being told that the people are angry because of the unemployment and welfare situation, they are angry at all the levels of governments, and they are angry because they feel powerless, and I can certainly understand them, and all that anger is directed towards the new government.

I had a better opinion of my Quebec colleague than that. Politics does not make you lose your analytical ability, your knowledge of history or your good sense. Yes, people are more and more angry, and my hon. colleagues should realize that our constituents want change. It is true that a large number of people are facing such problems that it does not make sense any longer.

You only have to think about these women who are walking from Montreal to Quebec City—at first it was for bread and roses, but I am sure it is not rosy all the time—who are painstakingly making their way to Quebec City to show that poverty as they know it does not make sense. Their situation was documented, written about, told, but now they want concrete solutions. These women know full well that our scope of action is limited as long as the province of Quebec does not have all the powers it needs.

Even within a sovereign Quebec, we will not be able to make all the needed changes instantly, but we know we will eliminate all the overlap and stop arguing, when we cannot even take the necessary measures to help the ordinary citizens. Ottawa will never do this for Quebec. So, everyone, including my hon. colleagues, will have to join us to build Quebec.

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the remarks made by the last speakers, particularly those made by the member for Longueuil who blamed the national debt on the Canadian federation. I also listened to the remarks made by the member for Mercier who, at the beginning of her speech, was going to blame the poverty level in the Montreal area on federalism, or I thought she would, but she stopped.

Moreover, she tried to say that the high unemployment rate was again a consequence of the federal system. Strangely enough, she forgot to mention that, even with the Canada social transfer, Quebec benefits considerably from federalism through equalization.

Many studies have clearly shown that Quebec has been able to grow within a federal system while benefiting enormously from such a system. She also forgot to mention that, through the unemployment insurance program, Quebec gets over \$1 billion more.

In this last allotted day that the official opposition has during this session, it has chosen once again to talk about four bills in order to try to show that federalism does not work, that the government wants to centralize powers. In her speech, the