

I want to share a couple of facts with the House. They are facts that I hope members from the prairie region will reflect on and work with me on helping to right this. Do members know that if they look at the share of national wealth that is held in the prairie region, in the three prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, that if we just held the same percentage of national wealth that we held in 1984 there would be \$26 billion more economic activity in those three provinces today? That is a staggering figure. That is more than the entire gross domestic product of the province of Manitoba. That is a fact.

In truth, a big chunk of that is the decline in oil revenues. But in my province of Manitoba, a small province, less than 4 per cent of the total population of the country, no oil revenues, we are \$1.6 billion poorer and 42,000 jobs poorer today than we were in 1984-85. I believe that is because we had a federal government that had no understanding of the regional character of this country, no understanding of how to use government as an instrument in the regions of this country.

The people in my province are not blaming anybody. They do not even blame Ontario.

An hon. member: They could.

Mr. Alcock: They could. They are approaching this new government, they are approaching the year 2000 with great optimism, and they are working very hard to meet the challenges that they are confronted with.

I spoke the other day in the House about a young business in my area. Four young graduates from the University of Manitoba—that is Manitoba, in the city of Winnipeg—had built a super computer. Not a good computer, a super computer, a 10-giga-flop massive computer. Not only have they built it from scratch in the city of Winnipeg, but they have successfully sold it to Korea, Japan, China, Brazil, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

There is a tremendous amount of energy and optimism and work going on in the province of Manitoba. But when I talk to people there, as I do every night from my office here, when talking about the problem with Canada, unlike the Leader of the Opposition who says the problem with Canada is Quebec, they tell me that Quebec is one of the great strengths of Canada. They tell me that it is the Canada we have built, the Canada that embraces diversity, the Canada that stands up for minorities, the Canada that has created a code of human rights, the Canada that embraces multiculturalism. It is that very diversity that gives them the strength to go out into the world and compete.

● (1655)

Out of these debates I take a couple of things that stick in my mind. There are two little statements that come to mind. One was told by the current Speaker who was recounting his first days in the House many years ago when he was taken aside by the Hon. Paul Martin Senior, the father of the current finance minister who told him: "Young man, whether you are here for 5 years or 20, remember that you are just passing through". I think about that statement and I think about a comment that the leader

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of my party, the Prime Minister, made in his speech when he spoke about about Canada as being a great work in progress.

Think about the work that we do here: pass some laws, amend some laws and rescind some laws. To tax or not to tax. We spend or we do not spend or we modify spending. Those are the tangible things we do. Those are the buttons we push or the levers we push.

However, there is an intangible thing we do in this Chamber and that is provide leadership to the rest of the country. I hear the talk about greater decorum and a more positive attitude. But when I read carefully through the speeches that I see coming out of the third party, I see very much the same kind of criticism I heard when I sat in the provincial legislature. They did not look at the throne speech and ask: "What is there and how should we discuss the things that are being committed to". They saw what was not there. They did not see the glass half full, they saw it half empty.

I hope that over the months and years to come we will have the kind of debate that is talked about. I hope we will have a competition in this House for good ideas. I hope we will challenge each other to see who has the best idea to solve a problem.

Would it not be wonderful if when our constituents watched television they went away saying: "Gosh, I learned something. I have been enlightened". I do not think that is the way they walk away from it now. It is going to take all of us to do that.

I hope that in the time I am passing through this Chamber that I can contribute in some small way to this great work which is Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, I am sorry I am not at my desk, could I ask my question from here?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The Standing Orders require that you be in your seat to ask a question.

I already recognized a member, but after him, if you wish, you could have the floor. The hon. member for Charlevoix.

Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating you, personally and on behalf of my constituents from the riding of Charlevoix, the riding of the former Prime Minister, Mr. Brian Mulroney, for your appointment to the chair.

● (1700)

Like my colleague from Ahuntsic, who spoke about infrastructures, I would like to say that in a riding like Charlevoix, where unemployment is high, and where the income level is low, the mil rate is nevertheless quite high. If I understand correctly what was announced by the President of Treasury Board regarding infrastructures, a grant of \$527 million would be paid to Quebec. For Quebec, \$527 million and \$700 million for Ontario. Granted, we elected a very small number of Liberals in Quebec while Ontario sent quite a few Liberal members to the House,