

Regional Development

An Hon. Member: Right on.

Mr. La Salle: And the Hon. Member for Papineau remembers vividly the problems he faced at the time, which he was unable to control, and which caused Montreal to lose its metropolitan image. That is not the result of the present Government's action. We made a commitment, and these will be my final words, the Prime Minister of Canada pledged first to restore communication between Quebec and Ottawa, and that has been achieved, Mr. Speaker, there is a renewed sense, among a majority of Quebecers, of faith in a Federal organization which is not only generous, but also respectful of every part of Quebec including Montreal East. Those commitments were carried through and will be carried forward, and I trust the Hon. Member for Montreal-Ste-Marie will eventually want to congratulate us for what we have done for the great Metropolitan Montreal.

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the eloquence of the speaker who has just resumed his seat but, just the same, I will point out to him that it is always the privilege of a newly elected Government to blame the previous one for the problems it has inherited. However, this Government has been in power for 20 months now and even if the problems of east-end Montreal cropped up under the Liberal Government, the problems in the shipyards, in the textile and other industries now on the wane, have continued, Mr. Speaker, under this Government and I can tell you that even if some jobs were created in Canada since September 1984, they were not created in Montreal.

Today, in Toronto, the unemployment rate has dropped to 5.4 per cent and in Ontario to 6.8 per cent. Those are fine results for Ontario, but in Quebec the unemployment rate is still at 11 per cent and even in Montreal the great metropolis of Quebec, the unemployment rate is about 15 per cent and it is still higher in east-end Montreal. This is why we see that in the polls, in spite of their 56 or 57 members in Quebec, the Tories are falling in the good opinion of Quebecers. Today, the SORECOM poll indicates that if an election were held now, a great percentage of Quebecers would vote for the Liberal Party, but 30 per cent of Quebecers would vote for the NDP and 28 per cent for the Conservative Party. They have fallen back to the third place in spite of their 57 members and this shows the failure of the Conservative Government to deal not only with the economic development of east-end Montreal, but also with that of the entire province. They lack capability and it hurts, Mr. Speaker. Where are those strong cabinet members responsible for defending Quebecers? Where are the powerful men and women in the Cabinet needed to create the economic policies, to restore Quebec's economic health? As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, instead of helping the economy east-end Montreal the Conservatives are hurting that economy. Looking at the economic structure of that major area of our largest city, we see that shipyards, textile and footwear industries and refineries are very important to that area's

industrial base. What have the Conservatives done for refineries in Montreal? They shut down the Gulf refinery. What did they do with the footwear industry? They opened the doors to all sorts of imports, to the prejudice of the Quebec footwear industries, including those in east-end Montreal. What did they do for the textile industry? For the textile industry, Mr. Speaker, they did nothing. They put off acting on all requests made by the clothing and textile industry for a policy that would guarantee a certain percentage of that market to Canadians. Here is an industry that is centered mainly in the Province of Quebec. It provides 20 per cent of all manufacturing jobs in Montreal.

I toured that industry in Montreal and I can state that despite a general improvement in Canadian industry, despite a certain reduction in the unemployment rate in Canada, here is an industry that is still completely depressed in Montreal. What are the Conservatives doing with all those Members from Quebec? Nothing at all.

The former Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion had promised us a policy. This Government has now been in power for 21 months, and it has had nothing to announce. The Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion are fighting hard within the Cabinet, and nothing has come out to ensure the survival of that industry that is so important for all Quebecers, especially for the Montreal area.

With respect to shipyards, the motion put forward by my friend for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) said the repair contracts should be granted to the Versatile Vickers shipyard in Montreal. But the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie ignores the fact that there are also concerns for the future of that important industry in Quebec and Sorel. I personally went to Sorel last Thursday, and I met workers there. I toured that important shipyard that has been serving Canadians for 50 years.

I wonder what criteria this Government used in deciding on the future of a major industry where employment has dropped 50 per cent in two years: from 14,000 to 6,500 employees. On whom was the future of the industry to depend? On Mr. Peter Paul Saunders, President of Versatile-Vickers, who lives in Vancouver, is not part of the Quebec industrial *milieu* and who owns two of Quebec's three shipyards, Marine Industries being the third. I put the question to the Minister today: Why didn't Mr. Saunders talk to the directors of Marine Industries, since it is the other shipbuilding company? I did not get an answer, Mr. Speaker. Instead of simply awarding a contract to Montreal East, we must have a policy that will provide for a Canadian merchant marine and employment for all our shipyards, not just those in the province of Quebec. But this Government is not doing a thing.

Did they meet the sacred and solemn commitments made by the Prime Minister during the election campaign in August 1984? They did not. They ignored all the promises they made to this major industry.