

Government Orders

Conservative Party to join the Bloc Québécois. It is a new experience for me as I said earlier because, for the first time, today I will finally be able to speak freely, without any restraint, in support of Quebec's interests. I will be able to work without worrying about votes I could lose or win in Newfoundland, in Ontario or in the West. I speak freely for Quebec, without any restraint. That must be clearly understood.

I noted today there was a certain complicity among all three parties Liberal, Conservative and New Democratic. They have decided to unite their efforts to launch a project that seems beneficial to Canada. I do not know how they managed to arrive at a consensus on such a project.

I say I am very reluctant to accept this project. First, Canada is so deep in debt that it is almost bankrupt. This is no secret now Canadians must realize that Canada is practically bankrupt. We are in debt to our ears.

• (1850)

And so the government launches a project. For some time, a number of experts in this country have been saying the project is not viable. Considering that fact, plus a national debt that is absolutely horrendous, I wonder why all three parties decided to support this project. I intend to support the interests of Quebec. I know Quebec pays a substantial share of income tax and taxes to the federal government, and I have an obligation to defend the interests of Quebec. Speaking on behalf of Quebecers, I say this project is not viable and that we should refuse to go any further until we have tangible proof that the project can make a profit. That is my point. I am not saying we should block the project altogether but I think we should take the time to analyze it and make sure we are not putting our money down a bottomless pit.

Mr. Lapierre: All \$2.7 billion!

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): I have the impression, and a lot of Quebecers with me, that we are just throwing money out the window.

Quebec has built a lot of big hydro-electric projects, for instance, for which Canada never paid a cent. We spent billions of dollars on developing expertise in the hydro-electric field, and Quebec paid the whole shot. Meanwhile, here in Ottawa, they were working on major nuclear projects—

Mr. Lapierre: For Ontario!

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): The Canadian government spent billions of dollars on the CANDU which isn't selling at all right now because it is much too expensive. It means all the money spent by the federal development on developing nuclear energy is mainly benefitting the other provinces.

Mr. Lapierre: Especially Ontario.

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): Mostly Ontario. At the present time, Ontario has cheap electrical power, thanks to the federal government which supported these projects. Today, together with Newfoundland, we could develop hydro-electric power again, at far lower cost, a project that would be worthwhile for Canada as well and would require far less investment. That is why today, speaking on behalf of Quebecers and Canadians, I have the impression we are wasting money we don't even have. If we keep investing money right and left in this country, in four or five years we will probably have to send more than 75 per cent of our paycheques to the federal government, and our standard of living might be as low as Mexico's today.

This is a very serious warning. It is appalling to see the three major parties trying to make political gains and defend one another because they have votes to win or lose, God knows where. But if you look at this project coldly you realize that it is not a profitable undertaking.

Because we know for sure we will not win and because we are a minority in this House, we members of the Bloc Québécois say that if we are about to lose a lot of money in an unprofitable venture the least we can do is give Quebecers and Quebec companies an opportunity to bid freely.

Mr. Lapierre: Even Canadian companies!

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): Even Canadian companies! The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources himself said that most of the profits flowing from this company or from this major project would go to the United States. The minister himself said that, as reported in this morning's newspapers.

• (1855)

So Quebec is saying that if most of the profits end up in the United States we would at least like to see Canadians getting their fair share of investment capital during the construction of this major project. That would be the least we could ask for. We did not go so far as to say that Quebec should have its fair share. We are quite conciliatory, quite reasonable. We are saying: Canadians