

of *Hansard*, the minister told us he made changes to suit the special cases of Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

• (1532)

However, when the minister, the Prime Minister, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet), and the Hon. Marc Lalonde, whose ministry I happen to forget—

**An hon. Member:** Federal-provincial relations.

**Mr. Broadbent:**—ironically enough, federal-provincial relations—when their charming, flexible thoughts turn to the province of Quebec and to the government of that province, flexibility goes out the window, and intolerance, inflexibility, and almost blind hatred fill their place. At this time in our history that is a tragedy. It is demonstrated by the kinds of phrases used by the minister and others in this House. At page 4504 of *Hansard* the Minister of Finance is reported to have said about Mr. Parizeau, the Quebec minister of finance—and let us note the contrast in language and tone between the quotations he has used to describe his relationship to other governments—the following:

... he has to live with his own decision, just as I have to live with my own decision.

Unfortunately that same attitude of inflexibility is carried over not only in the thoughts and actions of the Minister of Finance but also in the thoughts and actions of all senior ministers, including the Prime Minister of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have stated that they proposed the same policy to all provinces. That is not true. The Minister of Finance did not threaten to crush the other provinces with a unilateral decision were they to refuse his sales tax reduction. He threatened the province of Quebec only. Threatening and blackmailing a province in such a way is unacceptable. In that sense, that act of the Liberal government is the most serious in ten years. It is the first time the threats of the Prime Minister go so far in threatening a province and it is ironic that he should pretend to be the great champion of national unity and then take such steps against the province of Quebec and not only against the government of Quebec.

Had the minister of finance of Ontario proposed a similar selective cut, I am sure that the federal Minister of Finance would have accepted. There is no doubt about it in my mind. But the same idea coming from Mr. Parizeau is unacceptable. I think the Minister of Finance knows it as well as I do. The selective sales tax cut in Quebec does not benefit Quebec alone, far from it. Ontario also derives enormous advantages from it. I will explain that in a few minutes. I think the current crisis we are in is due to the blind intolerance of the great federal Liberal tenors about everything the present government of Quebec does. To my mind, it is a certain fact.

[*English*]

If we are going to reject the response of the Quebec government, it seems to me that we have to do so in this, the federal legislature of Canada, on the ground that it is unacceptable in principle to the thrust of this legislation. The Minister of Finance himself has indicated, as I tried to show in my earlier comments, a flexible attitude toward the other provinces. I want once again to emphasize that a flexible attitude is commendable in a major financial measure, but it is only when we come to Quebec that we do not find that flexibility. The test for us in assessing this measure is whether what Mr. Parizeau and the prime minister of the province of Quebec propose is compatible or not compatible with this federal legislation in principle and, if it is compatible but simply departs in some detail, then we should accept it because we have accepted the right of almost every other province to depart in some detail from the central principle of the legislation.

What has the province of Quebec said? First, it has asked for a transfer to it of the financial equivalent of what it would have got if it had accepted the original tax proposal of the federal government.

Second, the Quebec government has offered a complete tax reduction in five sectors of its economy, shoes, textiles, clothing, furniture, and hotel bills, and for what reason? The reason is that this is very important not only for the province of Quebec but for all other provinces. In this proposal the Quebec government is on exactly the same ground and in exactly the same constitutional position as any other province.

Mr. Parizeau and the prime minister of the province of Quebec have said that they are taking this position because it accords with their interpretation of the existing federal constitution, and on that they are dead right. They are not mistaken.

They are not acting as separatists. They are acting as good federalists, so to speak. An hon. member opposite shakes his head. He will have to convince this House that what the Quebec government is doing in this regard is contrary to the principle of federalism. Ironically in this context of Canadian history, it is the separatist government of the Parti Quebecois in Quebec which is being federalist, and the Liberal Party of Canada which is causing a separatist tendency in the province of Quebec. What Mr. Parizeau has said is that a tax area like this is within provincial jurisdiction and therefore the priorities in terms of its application should be up to a particular province to decide.

Saskatchewan could have done the same thing if it had wanted to. Ontario could have done it a different way if it had wanted to. Surely that is the point and, speaking for my party, I say that that is exactly the position we take. If I understand the position of the official opposition, that is exactly the position it is taking too. The government of the province of Quebec has said that constitutionally it should have the right to set the priorities in jurisdictions where it has authority under the federal system. The Quebec government has argued that its proposal would create more jobs. If I understand it, that is exactly the argument of the Quebec government.