

Adjournment Debate

the great defender of national unity. But those who followed the election campaign closely saw that in Joliette, the hon. member for Joliette and Minister of Supply and Services was elected with the support of the Péquistes. As evidence of all this, I shall mention only his haste to dissociate himself quickly from the federalist forces and the statement he made on his first opportunity to hold a press conference in Quebec. I believe this explains why I did not receive a satisfactory reply to my question to the right hon. Prime Minister.

Is this also one of the reasons why the Prime Minister has shelved any idea of holding a federal referendum? Why should he have deprived himself of such an effective political tool when his political enemy has such a tool? He does not want to win, he does not want to use all the means at his disposal to win a real victory, especially when we know that if the referendum question is ambiguous, a referendum at the federal level organized by the federal authorities would have provided the means to check the true feelings of Quebecers on the issue of federalism.

Who will benefit if we are deprived of this political tool? Only the Parti Québécois. I do not know which other political party could benefit. However, this is the position taken by the Progressive Conservatives. We may well wonder why. I have the impression that this government does not want to face such a referendum. They want to have it both ways and they are trying to soften up the Parti Québécois. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that there should be no compromise when such a serious issue is involved.

This country will not be defended with faint-heartedness, it will be defended with clear, concrete, inspired and, if possible, inspiring statements. So I am beginning to understand, and I am trying to find explanation for those ambiguous and vague answers I got from the Prime Minister. Another dozen or so questions were put, and after searching his mind at length, the Prime Minister finally stated that it was another thing, namely, that there was an agreement between Quebec federalists under the provincial Liberal banner and Quebec federalists under the federal Progressive Conservative banner. That is really very strange indeed. Those people agree with the provincial Liberals but they do not want to work with them under the "no" umbrella. According to him, we have profound disagreements between federal Liberals and provincial Liberals, but nevertheless we are working under the "no" umbrella with Mr. Ryan. So the Prime Minister is trying to show there are deep differences on our side, but none on theirs, but he does not want to commit himself determinedly to work for the "no" side in the referendum. I find that situation entirely abnormal, and I think that on other occasions we will try to get clarifications on this point from the Prime Minister or his ministers.

[*English*]

Mr. John Bosley (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the normal phrase to say at this time is that I am pleased, and I suspect that I should say that, to answer

[*Mrs. Sauvé.*]

the hon. member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mrs. Sauvé) on behalf of the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark), although I do feel that every time the opposition continue their attempt to make a partisan issue out of the unity of this country, it is difficult to say that one is pleased to reply.

It seems to me that in fairness the hon. member has in fact asked three questions which she feels the Prime Minister did not answer adequately. Those questions are: what is the government's position in regard to the Quebec government's thesis, namely, sovereignty-association; what will be the role of the members of this government during the pre and during the referendum campaign; and what will be the attitude of the card-carrying members of the Progressive Conservative Party during this period?

• (2230)

On the first question, there can be no question as to the clarity of the Prime Minister's answer. For the hon. member to suggest otherwise is something I fail to understand. The Prime Minister has stated over and over that sovereignty-association is incompatible with federalism, incompatible with its renewal, and for this reason unacceptable to this government, absolutely and clearly unacceptable.

The answer to the second question is equally clear. The role for members of this government is to demonstrate that there is in Ottawa a government open to the aspirations of Quebecers, flexible in its dealings with the provinces, imaginative in the managing of federal-provincial relations and, finally, totally determined to renew and to modernize our federalism.

Finally, the best way to handle the third question is simply to quote the reply given to the hon. member by the Prime Minister.

There will be a participation of the Quebec fighting wing of the Progressive Conservative Party under the umbrella committee which was organized to support federalism in the province of Quebec.

That is as clear as day. On this side of the House we do not and have not attempted to question or to impugn the sincerity of the previous government or members opposite in their attempts to renew the constitution. Nor have we challenged their commitment to federalism. However, we have learned from their sad experience that something new has to be tried to hold this country together. It is that new approach that the Prime Minister talks about in this House day after day. Surely the time has come to end the conversations about whether we are consistently or differently or equally federalist, and to recognize that we are all federalists here.

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY—INCREASE IN INTEREST RATE—
ACTION TO AVOID SMALL BUSINESSES DECLARING
BANKRUPTCY

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Mr. Speaker, on October 25 I raised a question about the relationship between interest rates and the number of bankruptcies that have occurred this year in this country. What prompted that question was the alarming increase of almost 9 per cent this