

*The Address***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from January 18 consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his Speech at the opening of the session.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, here we are at the beginning not only of a new year but also of a new Parliament, with a new government, a new official opposition elected by the people of Quebec and a new formation representing mainly Western Canada.

The government party and the third party were given clear mandates by their respective voters. I wish to congratulate both leaders for their success at the polls. To the Prime Minister in particular, I wish health, clear-mindedness and broadness of outlook in carrying out his duties in this crucial time in the history of Canada and Quebec.

The people of Quebec will soon decide their future following a debate that we all hope will be marked by a spirit of democracy. This is also a time when the adverse effects of the combined economic and political crisis are threatening to make a growing number of our fellow citizens lose hope.

I also want to pay my respects generally to all the other members elected to this House. On behalf of my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, I can assure the Speaker, the government and all members of this House of our full co-operation in respecting decorum in this House. We will see to it, as far as we are concerned, that exchanges remain courteous though intense, rational though impassioned, orderly though vigorous.

The major change in this House is undoubtedly the massive influx of sovereigntist members from Quebec. No one can trivialize the shift represented by the decision some 2 million voters have made to send 54 members here to pave the way for Quebec's sovereignty.

● (1530)

The dynamics which led Quebec to this decision were such that enough members were elected to form the Official Opposition. Paradoxical as it may seem, this electoral result flows from an implacable logic.

Indeed, it was inevitable that these old walls, which too often resounded with the voices of Quebecers who were ready to approve measures rejected by the voters, such as the Charlottetown Accord and the unilateral patriation of 1982, would one day hear the speeches of members who base their party allegiance on the commitment never to accept to compromise Quebec's interests in Ottawa; members who are freed from the

constraints of the old Canada-wide parties and who therefore will not be torn between their obligations as federalist parliamentarians and their loyalty to Quebec; members whose political career is motivated only by the determination to work, with their blinkers off, for Quebec's sovereignty.

Many in English Canada were surprised by the Bloc Québécois's achievement on October 25. To tell the truth, I am not surprised by that: the channels of communication from Quebec to English Canada are significantly distorted as they cross the border, so that the Quebec reality is perceived in a very confused way on the other side. That is the first justification for the presence of Quebec sovereigntists in this House.

Institutions often lag behind reality. The previous House of Commons was no exception to this rule; the stinging rejection of the Charlottetown Accord by voters in Canada and Quebec is striking proof. Today, the main architects of that accord have all disappeared from the political scene. They were the same people who showed cold indifference to the misfortune brought on by the long and difficult recession which began in the spring of 1990.

The voters have set the record straight. For the first time in contemporary history, this House which is now beginning its work reflects the very essence of Canada, its binational nature and the very different visions of the future which flow from that. Truth is never a bad advisor. As General de Gaulle said, one may well long for the days of sailing ships, but the only valid policy one can have is based on realities.

What are the realities with which this House will be faced? First of all, a really bad economic situation. To realize the full extent of it, it is not enough to look at the total picture as it is now; we must put it in the relevant chronological context.

The latest recession lasted roughly from April 1990 to April 1992, when net job losses stopped. But big business continues to lay off employees and the so-called recovery is so anemic that only economists dare to call it a recovery. Now, in early 1994, per capita GDP for all of Canada is still nearly 5 per cent less than it was in 1989. We know that per capita GDP is a more relevant indicator than total GDP, since it is affected by population growth, which is very large in Canada. Not only has Canada declined in relation to its partners but it is doing worse than before.

The employment situation does not seem any brighter, any more encouraging. By the end of 1993, the Canadian economy had regained only 60 per cent of all the jobs lost during the recession. The situation in Quebec is even more disastrous, since the recovery rate there is only 25 per cent. It must be said that for all practical purposes, Quebec had no government for much of 1993, but in that time, many young people arrived on the labour market. Just to absorb the number of net new job seekers, the Canadian economy would have to create over 200,000 jobs a year, about 45,000 of them in Quebec. The 1993