

ideology, its veneration of the status quo or simply because of petty politics.

Another area where the government is not taking its responsibilities has to do with public probity. It is praiseworthy to talk about promoting parliamentary democracy and deferring to the moral authority of the Speaker, but when searching for ways to enhance the credibility of parliamentarians, it is too easy to make only cosmetic reforms. The Speech from the Throne fails to recognize that the first step to take to ensure an ethical public service is to institute party financing by the people. When will federal parties forego the unlimited contributions they get from large corporations? When will they finally get out from under their hold? The Bloc, for one, made the necessary sacrifices to enter this House with its hands free. Of its free will, it adopted the restrictions provided by the Quebec legislation, drawing its inspiration from one of the great democratic principles passed down to us by René Lévesque. To talk about a political code of ethics and to think openness can be achieved without reforming party financing is just smoke and mirrors.

The opportunities flowing from the generalities of the Speech from the Throne are no better in the area of equity. First, the omissions of the abbreviated red book that serves as a Speech from the Throne say a lot about the Liberal complacency where fiscal inequities are concerned.

Canadians are not all equal before the tax system. Some benefit from tax shelters that have no economic justification. Some sell smuggled cigarettes or liquor and others buy them. Several avoid paying any tax, thanks to the underground economy whose rapid expansion is a measure of the poor performance of the GST. This tax, which was supposed to bring in \$16.5 billion of federal revenue in 1991, yielded only \$15 billion in 1993. The government's legitimacy is still losing ground while the idea that it is OK to evade taxation is gaining ground.

Some adjustments must be made. First, illegitimate tax shelters must disappear. Second, smuggling must be eradicated. In fact, there is only one peaceful way to do this and that is to pull the carpet out from under the smugglers' feet, that is, to reduce sharply the price gap between the product sold legally and the smuggled one. It has become urgent from a social point of view to reduce taxes on tobacco because of all the repercussions due to their prohibitive level. If we do not take immediate and decisive action, the social contract will continue to be broken a little bit more every day.

Inequity breeds inequity. Not only will wealthy families be allowed to shelter huge sums of money into trusts but, in a blatant example of double standards, the government will recoup by reducing the social safety net provided to the underprivileged. Lacking the courage to cut into its wasteful spending, into federal-provincial duplication and into unjustified tax shelters, the government will prefer to make the unemployed, the people on welfare and pensioners pay. The direct victims of the crisis are about to be described as troublemakers at the very time where they most need the help they are used to expect,

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given the compassion and social solidarity held as true Quebec and Canadian values.

• (1615)

We have heard various hypotheses about what the government intends to do with the social programs and provincial transfers. In the Throne Speech, we heard about "reform", "renewal", "streamlining", "restructuring", "modernization", "redefinition" and "review". In fact, we heard all the deceitful synonyms used by governments trying to avoid the appropriate terminology, like cuts, reduction, and decrease. Any extended recession tends to increase the income gap between the people at the top of the pyramid and those at the bottom. The previous government was particularly insensitive to the seriousness of the last recession and the hardships it brought about. There is a new kind of poverty in Canada. It is unacceptable that the new budget cuts be aimed at people already severely affected by economic hardships. To work together to get out of the recession is one thing. But to do so at the expense of the people who are already suffering too much is something the Bloc Québécois is determined to expose and fight. For us in the Bloc, social protection is something that remains inviolable.

The same goes for federal transfers to the provinces, which have been targeted in the last few years. As you know, these transfers are used to finance part of the provincial social programs. Parliament has yet to be consulted and already the government is talking about simply freezing the transfers for the next five years. Such a decision would put the blame on the provinces for the federal budget crisis, which would be a blatant non-truth. Economically, transfer freezing would result in a decrease, in constant dollars, of 3.5 percent per capita per year, for a total reduction of 18 percent over five years. But in fact, more than 60 percent of these payments are made to the poorer provinces. Quebec would become a net contributor to the federation, which would be a total aberration. And the federal government would wash its hands and seem to have a good conscience, while the provinces are left to care for the underprivileged who have been dealt another blow.

With respect to federal inequities towards Quebec, it is hardly enough to say that the Speech from the Throne was silent on that subject. It would be more appropriate to say that the government wants to bury these telling signs of the true fate of Quebec under the federal system in Canada. Not a line on that, not a word, not even a subtle reference, nothing. The government continues to ignore the official statistics, compiled here in Ottawa, which clearly show that in many areas Quebec receives a lot less than its fair share, namely in the areas of federal procurement, federal investments, agriculture, research and development, regional development, defence and so on. The media in English Canada have blamed the Bloc for putting the emphasis on those areas where Quebec is at a disadvantage and ignoring those where our province enjoys an advantage. They accuse us of painting a darker picture of the situation without reason. The presence of sovereigntists in this House is absolutely necessary