

bankruptcy which seems imminent because of the present government.

[English]

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Lincoln): Mr. Speaker, my contribution to the debate will be brief. Listening to the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle), something I have had the pleasure of doing for many years, I could not help but note, as I listened to his useful contribution, that perhaps it is time members opposite forgot the fact that they lost an election. It seems to me that most of their contributions, covering the widest range of subjects, reflect a preoccupation with the fact that they are no longer in power. I have listened to the hon. member for Joliette, to the former minister of finance, and to other members rising at every opportunity, repeating, retracing the events in December which led to the defeat of that government. Every time I listen, the events are depicted or described a little differently.

The government which was defeated in December was defeated because the opposition, exercising its democratic right, in its collective wisdom decided that the government was not capable of administering the affairs of the nation. That is the political process under which we operate. But what the members opposite never state is that on February 18 the people of Canada, in record number, went to the polls after listening for two months to the arguments of the government as to why the opposition parties were irresponsible. They listened to the explanations as to why the concepts of the then minister of finance were logical, to assurances that there was a master plan which would restrain spending, revitalize private industry, and do all the proper things.

The people of Canada had 60 days in which to evaluate the events of that fateful night in December, to listen to the arguments of the minister of finance, the leader of the government of the day, the hon. member for Joliette and others. If the party of the hon. member for Joliette had a case, then the people of Canada had an opportunity on February 18 not only to return that government to power but also to do it by a substantial majority. They did not do that, and I am surprised that hon. members opposite are still discussing, reviewing, and moaning over the events of December 14, or whatever the date was, and saying nothing at all in debate about the events of February 18.

● (1630)

As I recall that election campaign, night after night the then minister of finance and the then leader of the government went on television and leading ministers went across the country, talking about the irresponsibility of the Liberal party and the New Democratic Party, and the copping out in their responsibilities of the Creditistes. The message was pure and simple. Hon. members opposite said that if they were re-elected, they would bring back exactly the same budget, and they gave their reasons. That is exactly the message which came through every day and every evening on the news. It dominated, quite logically, the speeches of the members of the government of the day. Why? Because they believed in their philosophy. They

believed that it is necessary to put more people out of work in order to balance the budget.

They went back to Adam Smith's concept. They tried persuasively to tell Canadians that in December the opposition parties had acted collectively and irresponsibly. The Canadian people did not accept their version of the events. If anything, the Canadian people applauded what took place in this very democratic Parliament in getting rid of a government which, if it had not been defeated at that time, would have brought us back to the good old days of R. B. Bennett. There is nothing different in the philosophy of the former minister of finance and the minister of finance of the hungry thirties. There is nothing different in the policy re-enunciated a few moments ago by the hon. member for Joliette and those which brought us the terrific depression of the thirties.

I am not a cabinet minister; I can criticize. In the United States the President said on television Saturday or Sunday—it was Sunday morning when I heard him—"We miscalculated, it is not going to be a recession, it is going to be a deep depression," and he urged Americans to start spending. "Spend, spend, spend", was exactly the message which came from Schultze. There has been a whole series of speeches and public interviews on American television over the last four weeks. Schultze, the economic adviser to the President, was really saying that once again the ability of the American administration to fine tune has been miscalculated. To fine tune what? The level of acceptable unemployment? I never thought the day would come as a politician or as a member of Parliament that one's success would be measured by one's ability to put X number of people out of work. I am talking now about the previous government for the moment.

Mr. McDermid: You are the one complaining about relevancy.

Mr. Mackasey: I will be talking about this government in a moment. I am responding to the speech of the hon. member for Joliette, who had every right to make a speech. He had every right to get up and say that his government was right, that its policies in December were accurate, and that we should never have defeated it. He was unable to sell that argument to the Canadian people in February, and if we are back in the House of Commons as the government it is not because the party of hon. members opposite was defeated in December but because when the Canadian people, when given an opportunity, decided that they preferred to re-elect a Liberal government with a majority.

Mr. Malone: Two provinces.

Mr. Mackasey: If there had been any substance to the argument of the hon. member for Joliette that somehow we defeated the government because we were being expedient, ganging up and taking advantage of a minority government, and if Canadians really believed it, they would have shown their displeasure with the opposition parties by seeing not only that they did not form a government but also by making sure that the Conservative party came back with a majority.