

*The Address—Mr. Plamondon*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Debate will now resume on the amendment.

● (1250)

*[Translation]*

The Hon. Member for Richelieu.

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu):** Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues of the Progressive Conservative Party, Hon. Members of the Opposition. First of all, I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the people of the riding of Richelieu, who supported me in such great numbers on election day.

Mr. Speaker, before getting to the main subject of my speech, I would like to say a few words about this vast riding of Richelieu. Some areas are very industrialized, and I am thinking of Sorel-Tracy and Pierreville, while fishing is important at Baie-du-Fèbvre, farming is the major source of income in Nicolet and the Bécancour area is about to experience significant industrial development with the new Pêchiney factory.

My riding also wanted a real change on September 4. People in my constituency were sick and tired of the lack of agricultural policies, the appalling uncontrolled frittering away of the La Prade Fund, the lack of measures to initiate genuine economic recovery by creating permanent jobs, and finally the lack of opportunities for our young people. That is why they rejected an aging government without a real policy, which was literally driving the country to ruin.

After Canadians made their decision, in the Speech from the Throne on November 5, the new Government set out the key policies it intends to pursue during its mandate.

The Throne Speech has shown all Canadians that the Government intends to live up to basic commitments made during the election campaign. It reflects the firm resolve of the caucus to end twenty years of petty quarrelling, which created divisions in our society that will be difficult to overcome. The centralist and paternalistic kind of federalism promoted by our hon. friends opposite during the past twenty years, thereby obstructing the legitimate aspirations of the provinces, is now dead and should be buried as deep as possible.

As far as Quebec is concerned, Denyse Amiot, a freelance journalist writing for the Canadian Legion—which certainly cannot be accused of having separatist leanings—said: The Liberals went so far in opposing any initiative taken by Quebec, whatever its merits, that they could no longer, without renouncing their own policies, retreat from an attitude which, after serving them well for a short time in 1980, finally became their downfall. They failed to understand the message voters were trying to give them. Only a few days before September 4, the Secretary of State gave another example of Liberal high-handedness when he tried to circumvent the Province by paying funds directly to Quebec universities. The result: the

presidents of the universities protested, and subsequently, the then Secretary of State, now become a symbol of this kind of arrogance, went down to defeat in his own riding.

A few months before, the fisheries industry in Quebec had been unilaterally declared to be under exclusive federal jurisdiction. The ensuing frustration and confrontation led to a drop in the number of landings, bankruptcies and widespread discontent. The result: all ridings where fishing is a major industry turned their backs on the Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, I shall now discuss a subject that is particularly important to the riding of Richelieu. I am referring to the fact that instead of negotiating in good faith with Quebec the redeployment of funds originally earmarked for the construction of the La Prade heavy water plant at Bécancour, the Liberals decided to distribute these funds at will in the towns and villages of central Quebec. The result: all ridings in this area repudiated the Liberals, even if they had apparently benefited from their largesse.

Mr. Speaker, this kind of federalism was not Canadian federalism. It was a travesty of the spirit in which the fathers of the Canadian Confederation drafted the Constitution of 1867.

As for this Government, it has already clearly indicated in the past few days that there will be a complete change of direction. This has already been reflected in a noticeable detente in relations with the various provincial governments.

It is clear that our task will not be any easier as a result of twenty years of incompetence and a \$34 billion deficit. However, despite this unfortunate state of affairs, we of the Progressive Conservative Party are facing the future with firm resolve and shall deal with the mistakes of the past.

In his economic statement, the Hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) indicated the only possible route, which is to reduce a debt that, today, has a stranglehold on Canadian money markets. Obviously, cutting the deficit will not be easy and some of our projects may have to be temporarily shelved. Members of the opposition can rest assured that I will have special thoughts for them every time that happens. Cutting the deficit means that choices must be made and priorities reconsidered. The economic statement of the Minister of Finance does give us an indication of what those priorities will be. Making that kind of choice is difficult and painful, but I am convinced that he will keep in mind the needs of a riding such as mine which the Liberals have neglected for over twenty years.

Indeed, the riding of Richelieu was once Quebec's metallurgical centre, but it had to cope with declining markets, not to mention the lack of research and development programs in metallurgy. Everyone can see that those vast regions, including Sorel-Tracy where 77 per cent of the industrial labour force works in metal processing and manufacturing plants, need