

Integration of businesses in Quebec and Canada as well as the need to integrate businesses in Quebec and Canada with American businesses make it imperative that we maintain harmonious relations among ourselves. In turn, maintaining harmonious relations forces us to maintain the existing economic union, but under new terms, whereby each partner has a say in problem solving.

Where the shoe pinches right now is that one country is divided, with one partner claiming to have all the answers and be in a better position to manage the other one's taxes and imposes its will by force of numbers. That is why we were never able to find a solution: we realize that we are so terribly different.

When I was in college, we had a professor who used to say: "My friends, always remember that, when confronted with a problem, unless you hold the solution or are part of the solution, you are part of the problem".

That is the kind of situation we are in at present in Canada and Quebec. Over the past few decades, we have come to realize that we were facing certain problems. We told Canada: "Here is a possible solution: If you agree to a redistribution of powers between our two peoples, so as to allow greater fairness, greater autonomy and greater respect for our two peoples, we could find a solution for this great united Canada".

Unfortunately, Quebec, particularly over the last 30 years, has constantly clashed with the federal government and the rest of Canada, which want to keep control over the province's tax system, over its decisions and, in fact, over any major decision that a nation has to make regarding its future.

We feel that Canada was more part of the problem than part of the solution. This is why we initiated a referendum process, a democratic process which will allow Quebecers to freely express themselves and tell Canadians: "Ladies and gentlemen, tomorrow morning we wish to offer you a new sharing of responsibilities; we wish to offer you a new partnership whereby we will decide together, on an equal footing, what should be done to ensure the best possible future for us".

• (1615)

Let us not forget that soon, when Quebec becomes sovereign, the rest of Canada will no longer be in as strong a position, relative to other foreign countries. It is wrong and it is misleading to suggest that the rest of Canada will still be a strong country, while Quebec will have become a weak nation. A Canada without Quebec is a weaker Canada and a Quebec without Canada also takes on a different dimension. This is why we will have to find a way to pool our skills and strengths to maintain as best as we can our trade relations with other countries.

Should this not happen, Canada will not immediately go bankrupt, nor will Quebec: our two new countries will have to

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face international conditions different from those which currently prevail, something which might be harder to do. Clearly, it is easier to enter into a partnership to solve issues, rather than try to find solutions to the same problems separately. This is obvious. But we cannot do it right now. We are told: you are already in a partnership, why do you want to leave? This is an illusion. We want out because we feel that we are not in a true partnership arrangement. We are in a minority position in a country where our province accounts for about 25 per cent of the population, and where half of the taxes paid by Quebecers are controlled by the majority.

We want more than that for Quebecers. We mentioned commercial reasons regarding free trade agreements. We could also provide reasons related to the number of jobs. We are not talking about the loss of one million jobs. We are not even talking about a loss, because we know that our partners of tomorrow will not let 250,000 jobs in Ontario disappear. Indeed, there are 250,000 jobs in that province that are directly related to goods sold in Quebec, particularly in the automotive industry.

In western Canada, 75,000 jobs are directly related to trade between those provinces and Quebec. We buy 50 per cent of the beef produced in the west. Tomorrow, Quebecers will not want to stop eating western beef, nor will western producers want to stop selling us their beef, because 75,000 jobs are at stake. In Atlantic Canada, we are talking about 26,000 jobs. Maritime provinces will not risk losing 26,000 jobs by eliminating economic and trade activity with Quebec.

In Canada, a total of 352,000 jobs depend directly on the trade between the rest of Canada and Quebec. I imagine that on October 31, businessmen will start calling their Premiers and ministers to tell them: "Gentlemen, let us be serious. Let us get down to business. Let us get back to basics and sound business practices. Keep protecting our markets and our jobs. Sit down and talk to each other and stop being so obsessed with your own policies".

I did not make up these examples. They exist today. This is the reality of trade, whether we like it or not.

The same goes for NAFTA. They want to scare us. They say that the next day we could no longer enter into an agreement, be part of NAFTA. However, tomorrow morning, for instance, we can enter into an agreement with the United States on estate taxes.

Americans who own securities, property or factories in Quebec or who come and work here a few months every year, tomorrow morning, these Americans will want to adopt the same bill, either with Quebec or a united Canada. Why is this bill before the House today? Because we realize that some Americans are penalized by differences in legislation, just as some Canadians and Quebecers are penalized by the law as we know it today.