

with an attitude of concertation rather than confrontation, we will prove to all Quebeckers that their future and the numerous benefits offered by this country still lie within a constitutional framework, albeit much more flexible than anything we could invent until now. Therefore, when I listened to the hon. member for Laprairie (Mr. Deniger), who earlier raised questions:

● (1530)

How come Ontario and British Columbia pay more for goods when they could get them cheaper in Quebec? How come our economy is almost at its lowest? How come this country is divided? I forgive him, Mr. Speaker, he is a new member. He may not have followed what his party did in the last ten years. How is it that a government made up of about 60 Quebeckers that has ruled for 16 years has put the country in a situation like this? How is it that they have been unable to provide Quebeckers with the message they were expecting?

How about the co-operation Quebeckers expected from them? The member should know that the number of people in Quebec dissatisfied with federalism as advocated by his party has increased I do not know how many times. They have failed and they should ask themselves how it is that our country is in such a poor economic state. How come his own party has let unemployment soar from 200,000 to 1,500,000 in less than ten years? That is the kind of questions the member for Longueuil (Mr. Olivier) should ask himself instead of interrupting those who have points to make like me today.

I suggest that this adaptability on our part and, as I said, our willingness to listen to our counterparts in the various provinces will greatly help us build the foundation of a rejuvenated federalism much more in line with the provinces' aspirations. I am not inventing anything, Mr. Speaker, simply watching what is going on in Canada. Over the past 12 years which I have spent sitting in the House as elected representative for the Joliette riding, I have witnessed a great many confrontations which could have been prevented, in my opinion, if only the previous administration had demonstrated greater understanding.

Need I remind my hon. colleagues, for instance, of the sales tax imbroglio when I was deeply ashamed to hear my Quebec colleagues fly in the face of the most evident aspirations and interests of the province of Quebec. These are the people who are now accusing us of selling out to the provinces. Yet, they are the very people who are responsible for Canadian unity being put to the test, because they enjoyed these confrontations with the provinces; now they are wondering what essentially we mean when we talk about a greater need for understanding and adaptability with the provinces.

This desire to allow the provinces to participate in the major national decisions, this deep desire on the part of the Prime Minister and all my cabinet colleagues to give the provinces the opportunity to discuss important decisions having direct

implications on their own economy: here is the kind of federalism and the kind of administration we want to establish, Mr. Speaker. They charge that we are willing to sell out to the provinces and yet they are the ones who, after 16 years in power, have succeeded in tearing the country apart as is the case today, Mr. Speaker. I feel no sympathy for that kind of argument which they use too often.

Even the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton (Mr. Pepin), last week in Winnipeg together with a few Liberals, of course, are looking for a side track, a more secure way. I understand them because I have gone through that myself if it can make you feel better. I have experienced that but now they are going to go through it for a while, and I do not mind at all. Don't worry. Last weekend, the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton went to Winnipeg to say—he was taking the words out of my mouth—that the time has come to go toward a flexible federalism. Flexibility, adaptability, those are not their inventions. Of course, the reporter could not do better than say: The hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton has taken up the statements of the present Prime Minister of Canada. I was happy to read that. The hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton after what he had to do, and he is probably not always at ease with his party, considering the recommendations he made, still understood, and we are aware of it and very pleased about it, that some flexibility is necessary. Do not forget that, boys. Flexibility is important; you have not understood anything for a long time. Mr. Speaker, the degree of frustration of thousands of Canadians, of Quebeckers in particular, is only equalled by the morbid tenaciousness and the spirit of persecution developed by our opponents with a high degree of refinement to try to find opportunities to multiply confrontations and altercations with my province in particular, which is also their province.

We do not intend to dig up the hatchet of the Liberals, Mr. Speaker, but rather, as I said earlier, to begin a sustained dialogue. Today we are harvesting the results of the storm created by the former government. We intend to head for brighter skies, Mr. Speaker, by being more open to the claims of Quebec and of the other provinces on this side of the House. In this instance also, patience and time can do more than—

Mr. Olivier:—force and rage.

Mr. La Salle:—than force and rage. The hon. member for Longueuil (Mr. Olivier) knows that. But I am surprised that he has not put it in practice more often.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say a few words about our concerns in another area—

Mr. Olivier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): The hon. member for Longueuil (Mr. Olivier) on a point of order.