

now. The slide in the standard of living started as early as 1977, but the financial crisis of the state started to build momentum in 1982. As for the economy, Canada has been gradually losing its competitive edge for the last decade; during those ten years, except for a few bursts of energy such as the Ontario Boom, not only has Canada become less prosperous but it has been finding it hard to keep up with the most performing countries". In my opinion, it is this continuous downturn which triggered the political crisis, I mean the crisis which started in 1977. Canada, the triumphant one, was created in the sixties and seventies, rather artificially through massive federal interventions such as regional assistance financed by Ottawa, social programs financed by Ottawa and national institutions also financed by Ottawa.

• (1430)

When the economic slow down and the ensuing loss of prosperity started to impede the workings of the nation, the Canadian Government became unable to deliver the goods, which marked the beginning of the end. For example, it was when the federal government, under the Liberals, tried to replenish its coffers by taxing western resources that the west rebelled. And the more pronounced the crisis became, the more resentment grew as the Liberal government in Ottawa took measures to avert a financial catastrophe.

The reason why Canadians hate the Prime Minister so much is because of a whole array of politics such as the GST, free trade, symbolic cuts to VIA Rail for example, the redesign of unemployment insurance and tax increases. They want to shoot the messenger.

They are disillusioned with politicians mainly because there are no more handouts from the State and their dissatisfaction with federalism in its present form can also be explained that way. That is how, in my opinion, this creeping economic crisis contained all the right ingredients for a political crisis. But the whole situation was compounded by a unique Canadian attitude. Instead of facing up to reality, Canadians chose to flee. They took refuge in their national sport, the Constitution game, and tried to solve very real problems through constitutional amendments. Each region translated its deep resentment into constitutional parlance.

### *Supply*

But the bottom line is that if the economy had been in good shape and the central government in good health, this crisis would never have occurred, at least not to such a degree. It is not sure that we can ever go back. These constitutional debates are addictive; right now we are going through withdrawal pains. We have witnessed that for the last few weeks. Canadians are just now discovering their economic woes. And the first thing they want to do is find a political solution to them, throw Brian Mulroney out. But who will take his place? A minority government made up of regional parties who do not even have an economic platform. Once again we resort to magic. People want to replace Mulroney with someone who will promise them things. And lo and behold, the Liberal Party has been making promises these last few days—

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I would like to bring to the attention of the hon. member that he should not be using the Prime Minister's name. It is the right hon. Prime Minister. Instead of Mr. Mulroney use right hon. Prime Minister, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Saint-Julien:** I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, you are right. As I was saying at the beginning of my speech, I thought I was in the middle of an election campaign.

People want to replace him with somebody who makes promises, when what we need is somebody who will dare tell the truth. The fact is only a government not afraid of being unpopular will be able to get us out of this mess. Our economy is a shambles. I believe the only person who is not afraid to tell the truth is the Prime Minister of Canada.

In February 1983, under the Liberal government, Abitibi had the highest unemployment rate in the last decade to this day. On June 23, 1992, a local newspaper, *La Frontière*, mentioned the 1983 unemployment rate: "In the last 12 years, unemployment rates have often exceeded 20 per cent in the regions. Just look at those numbers: November 1981, 22.7 per cent; December 1981, 21.3 per cent. Every month of 1982, except October when the rate was 19.2, and the first six months of 1983,