

unemployment insurance? Ottawa, 46 per cent; Quebec, 14 per cent; shared, 40 per cent.

That is what the people of Saint-Léonard told us, Madam Speaker. I have also received letters, but I do not have enough time to read them into the record.

• (1940)

In concluding, I would like to say that for the citizens of Saint-Léonard, the Constitution is not necessarily the most important topic. In Saint-Léonard, the most important topic is employment, access to jobs for our young people, as well as unemployment and taxes. Madam Speaker, the Constitution came in fifth place. Therefore, I hope that we can settle this issue as quickly as possible and move on to more important things such as the economy and the creation of jobs for our young people. Of course, the process and the specifics could influence the percentages, but by and large 87 per cent were in favour.

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Madam Speaker, as a member from Quebec, I have always felt that the constitutional question was absolutely vital. In fact, it was one of the reasons that made me decide to run federally. Constitutional issues have been a favourite subject of Quebecers and of mine for many years, but became even more significant between 1970 and 1980.

In 1980, we had a referendum in Quebec, in which about 45 or 46 per cent of Quebecers voted for Quebec's sovereignty. I felt this percentage was significant enough to consider this particular preference on the part of Quebecers.

The unilateral patriation of the Constitution in 1982 violated the rights of Quebecers. In 1984, the Progressive Conservative Party said it wanted to start a process of reconciliation. As we all know, a proposal was tabled and accepted by the first ministers in 1987 and then turned down in June 1990, the so-called Meech Lake proposal.

Since that time, or I should say, since June 26, 1990, two members, one from Lac-Saint-Jean and the other from Compton-Mégantic—Stanstead, resigned in protest during the negotiations on Meech Lake, when we realized that Quebecers were getting the short end of the stick once more.

On June 26, 1990, three members of the Progressive Conservative Party resigned: the members for Rose-

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mont, Richelieu and myself. The day after my resignation, I received more than 300 calls from my riding, congratulating me on my brave gesture. Only three callers told me they were upset about what I did. All of which confirmed, as far as I and my colleagues who resigned were concerned, that ours was a legitimate and courageous act in the eyes of Quebecers. Ever since, I have had no regrets. It was a gesture made by members and people here in Ottawa to demonstrate clearly their position on the rejection of Meech Lake.

What did Quebec do? What did Quebec decide after this rejection? Quebecers and the Government of Quebec, in co-operation with the opposition party, decided to create a commission, one of the most high-powered commissions ever in Quebec. It was called the Bélanger-Campeau commission. Two well-known Quebec figures, with a great deal of credibility, agreed to act as joint chairman of the commission, with a mandate to consider and analyze Quebec's political and constitutional status.

This very serious undertaking was supported by 36 commissioners, including the Premier of Quebec, the Leader of the Opposition, members of the National Assembly, federal members from Ottawa, business executives, union leaders, cultural leaders, and others. They sat for six months and travelled through 11 administrative regions in Quebec. They sat in 11 cities and enjoyed the support of 55 experts. They held 277 hearings, including 32 forums with young people. They received 607 briefs from groups and individuals.

This was one of the most serious exercises ever conducted by Quebec. I think that today the federal government intends to forget what was achieved here. People said Quebec needed sweeping powers in order to be able to develop its full potential.

Since then, after this commission in Quebec, one can also read in the Bélanger-Campeau report: "We are going to see whether the federal government is serious, whether it can offer Quebec sufficient opportunities for development, we are going to look at all this, and if we don't like it, we will hold a referendum on Quebec sovereignty in October 1992 at the latest".

What did the federal government do? It established a committee, the Spicer committee, which travelled across Canada and made a fool of itself as a rule. Its own existence has always been questioned. It was a more or less serious exercise. Finally Canadians were asked for