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because they are worried about their jobs. They are worried about the future and whether they will be able to maintain their homes and automobiles. This is why people are not spending today.

Since the level of unemployment will continue at the 13 per cent level, the outlook today is bad. It was bad all last year when OECD told us that Canada ranked twenty-fourth out of 24 industrialized countries. We are at a point today where we must take stock. We must understand where we are today and where we can go from here. I believe that over the past 30 years or so we have become less and less self-reliant, less inclined to seek the solutions we need but more inclined to look much more to Government. I believe this is the heart of the economic malaise of today.

Governments—not just the Liberal Government which has been in power for a good part of this period, but also a number of provincial Governments—have moved steadily away from the position where after the war economic growth and performance was the number one priority, to the point where there are a number of other competing factors which are usually described under the very seductive heading of “quality of life”. In some cases they enjoy equal rank with economic performance and in other cases they have a higher ranking. We have reached a point where we must re-establish economic growth as the number one objective. We must never lose sight of those quality-of-life objectives. We must do our utmost to maintain that. In future we must constantly remind ourselves it is only through a healthy and growing economic climate that we can enjoy and maintain our quality of life. We must realize that it is conditional upon our success in achieving sustainable economic growth, higher levels of employment and stability in prices and interest rates. We must start now by establishing some new objectives and some new priorities for the country. I am not advocating any wrenching change in the system. Our economic system is basically sound. Nor am I proposing some sentimental return to the good old days, because I think we all know economically and politically that simply it is not possible. So my first objective for our country, and a very simple one, is to try to do a little better economically than our dominant trading partner, the United States. I stated this in one of my first speeches, after I was nominated for election in my riding some five years ago, and I must say that in the intervening period I have had serious second thoughts as to whether that was the right objective because that country was not doing as well as I thought it should do. But now that I see it improving and in many cases surpassing our economic performance, I think that is an appropriate objective for us to follow.

● (1600)

How should we measure this? I think we should be designing our economic policies to do just a little bit better than they do, in our economic growth, our performance with respect to inflation, employment growth, unemployment levels and in the whole performance of our competitive position, the value of our dollar.

As a second priority I believe we should establish a sound economic performance as our primary policy objective. Again, to repeat myself, while I would never relegate those quality of life objectives to a secondary position, I believe we must realize that these objectives are only obtainable on an ongoing basis if we enjoy a healthy economy. But put in its simplest terms, I may feel, and you may also feel, Mr. Speaker, that a cottage by a quiet lake in the country is the utmost in the quality of life, or a trip to Florida in the middle of winter, when it is cold as it is right now. But if we do not have the means to afford these things, if our economic performance is not good enough, our idea of the quality of life will bankrupt us, or at least will rob us of the necessities that we do need. That is the position that Canada has reached today.

My third priority is the key element in achieving the first two. This goes right back to the basis of the Opposition motion today. We must recognize that the way to achieve these goals is to build a social and economic consensus among our national partners, the provincial Governments, labour, business and the long-suffering, average Canadian.

I listened very carefully to what the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans) was saying about his idea of the importance of achieving that national consensus, because I believe that the Ministers on their side of the House in recent years have done their best not to try to build that national consensus. Our federal leaders have tried to govern through confrontation and conflict. I just remind you, Mr. Speaker, about the recent trip of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) when, in response to a very simple question about the importance of human rights in trade negotiations, rather than answer that in an unprovocative way, deliberately tried to provoke—and I would say he could not help it because of his nature—a very important element in that debate. Because he has provoked those people, the people who hold, very sincerely and emotionally, a sense of the importance of human rights in these countries and the desire to link these two, it has made the ongoing debate on improving either, one, the human rights performance, or two, the trade performance, of these countries much, much more difficult.

I am not so naive, Mr. Speaker, as to expect that relations will change overnight. Nor do I expect our future relations between the different national bodies will be totally without conflict. But let us look at Japan, to which many have referred in the House this afternoon. Japan has succeeded through co-operation and through national consensus. The experts say this is just not possible in Canada, that the federal Government could just never achieve the strength that the Japanese leaders have been able to achieve. But because they say that, because we have a very diverse country, is that any reason why we should deliberately take the reverse approach and govern in a way which deliberately provokes differences and confrontation? That is the attitude that must change and it is the attitude which must change at the top, with the federal Government and with the Cabinet, if we are ever to come close to achieving the national consensus and policy so many of us