

ways of spurring the economy and encouraging employment and development. And the provinces understood this.

However, he had one other minister of finance, the minister for Quebec, who heard him, and heard him again, and decided not to give a firm answer, and even at the last hour said: "I will answer you later". Our colleagues in the official opposition are once again not quite clear about what they are saying in that regard. The howls we would have heard from them if the budget had been postponed would have echoed throughout this land.

The Minister of Finance felt it necessary to accept his responsibility on that point and in fact make in his budget the offer which he had by implication made in his conversations with the ministers of finance across this country. Then when the negotiations with the ministers of finance had been completed and the budget was announced, the separatist minister of finance, whose objective may be economic in some short term manner, but whose real and fundamental objective is to divide this country, came forward with a proposition that was not designed to deal with the situation but to deal with the cause he holds dearest, and that is to separate from this country.

That minister of finance attempted to come just so close to the proposition which had been put before him that he might tempt the Minister of Finance into accepting it—just so close, but just so far away that he did not choose to put it on the table for days and weeks before the budget. He could have put that proposal forward and had it tested by the Minister of Finance and the other ministers of finance and seen it rejected on the basis of the consistency we were seeking to have in this sales tax reduction. The significant thing is he did not put it on the table, he did not have it accepted or rejected, and he did not accept or reject the proposal of the Minister of Finance because he wanted to keep his separatist options open in order to cause as much difficulty in this country as possible.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lang:** Then he came forward with his plausible proposition that, instead of reducing the sales tax across the board by a few percentage points, he would select certain items and reduce it all the way on those. This was plausible because it sounds somewhat close to the original proposition, but a little devious in its separatist aspect because he was choosing those particular products which were slightly more favourable to production in Quebec. That in itself is an objective of this government. This government has always intended, and has gone out of its way, to help regional development in this country, particularly in the Atlantic region and in the province of Quebec.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lang:** He came forward with this plausible proposal which, if he had put it forward in that period before the budget, would have been taken by the Minister of Finance to the other provinces, and the minister would have asked how it would meet their views of the arrangement they were trying to

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make. The arrangement had, however, been made, and when Mr. Parizeau came forward with his proposal our federal Minister of Finance went to several other ministers of finance with whom he had made the arrangement and reached understanding and asked them whether that would be acceptable to them. They said no, it was not consistent with their view of the arrangement which was being struck.

● (2032)

As a result, after hearing from Manitoba, British Columbia and Ontario, the Minister of Finance agreed with them that he could not, in fairness to the other provinces, change the arrangement now. The key is that in this House the Conservative opposition did not see that what was being played was one step of hundreds and hundreds of steps we will see until that separatist government is defeated. If they could not see it from the coolness of opposition—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. minister's time has not expired. It is only the hon. member for Kootenay West rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I regret that you described me as just being only the member from Kootenay West, but I will accept that particular position for the moment. I wonder if the minister would entertain a question now or after his speech with reference to his comments regarding the government's approach to development incentives for the various provinces.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member knows, of course, that he needs the consent of the hon. minister to ask a question.

**Mr. Lang:** If the hon. member had contented himself with simply saying "could I ask a question", I would have said yes; but he has made it clear that he is off on another branch of the subject. I would prefer to take that at the end of my remarks rather than in the middle, but I appreciate his interrupting me so that we could have a bit of a pause at this time.

I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that what we saw was the Conservative party falling into a trap that they will find presented frequently enough in this country. We have in this country a separatist government which has many techniques at its disposal, and among them is one of creating confrontations with the federal government. Over this past period of time we have been fairly free of those sorts of confrontations, notwithstanding their objectives.

In this particular case the Minister of Finance had the choice of either not attempting to have sales tax reduced in the province or of taking the risk of dealing in this fashion with the minister of finance from the province of Quebec. The record, however, on his part was clear and it should have been simple, but the minister of finance in the province of Quebec reduced sales tax in a different way, a way which favoured certain