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Canadian Manufacturer Association

Il me fait plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à la Canadian Manufacturer Association dans la province de Québec. Comme Premier ministre de cette province, je suis heureux que vous ayez choisi le Québec comme site de vos assises annuelles. Vous en êtes à votre 91^e réunion générale et votre Association a eu, depuis autant d'années, prendre une part très active au progrès industriel et commercial de notre pays.

Nous sommes aujourd'hui en 1962 et, même s'il est impossible de prédire l'avenir, personne ne doute que le Québec soit à la veille d'une expansion aussi notoire, sinon plus remarquable que celle dont a bénéficié notre pays de 1945 à 1957. Je ne manifeste pas en cela un optimisme exagéré auquel la réalité ne correspondrait pas; j'exprime tout simplement une constatation fondée sur l'ampleur des richesses que nous ne cessons de découvrir chez nous et sur le dynamisme d'une population, celle du Québec d'abord et aussi celle de tout notre pays, qui souhaite la mise en valeur de toutes ces ressources et qui s'apprête à prendre les moyens d'y arriver.

It is not my intention to draw you a picture of the industrial possibilities of Quebec, starting with the natural resources which our province has at its disposal. Even if we do not know the full extent of these resources, we are fully aware of their importance, and everyone else is aware of this, not only in Quebec, but in the rest of Canada and in foreign countries as well. We also know that these resources are still insufficiently developed and that they often exist in the form of huge reserves upon which we will be able to draw for years to come.

But the natural wealth which is found in our rivers, our soil, and underneath the ground is not sufficient to make a people wealthy. Something else is needed, and I believe that we in Quebec are finally on the way to obtaining it; it is a question of capital — not just — as we might be led to believe — of financial capital, but also of human capital.

As far as financial capital is concerned, by which I mean those sums which we must invest in our commercial and industrial growth, we do not lack them collectively in Quebec, but what each citizen of the province possesses individually cannot suffice to speed up the economic expansion to which the population of Quebec wants to devote a good part of its efforts. In this connection, the Government of Quebec wants to be realistic. It has realized that it would have to bring together the available capital of individuals which was spread all over the province, and direct it towards a common goal and into something from which the whole population could benefit. The Government knew that the great majority of the French-Canadian people who, for historical reasons that I will not dwell upon, were unaccustomed to investing their savings in more or less risky undertakings, could nevertheless change their traditional behaviour on condition that they would have what would appear to them to be reasonable guarantees. This is the reason why the Government of Quebec will establish a General financing company in these next few days. The Government itself will take an active part in this company and will also invite those citizens of Quebec who wish to invest their money in an undertaking which will be likely to promote the economic expansion of our province, to do the same. Capital investments from Quebec institutions and from those

outside the province will not only be accepted but will be welcomed. As a matter of fact, the Government of Quebec hopes that those to whom this capital belongs will want to put some of it into the development of the huge territory called Quebec. At first, naturally, there will be no question of the General financing company plunging into any risky projects; with time, and as its capital increases, it will become an essentially dynamic factor in Quebec's progress.

As for human capital — which we are often inclined to forget, and this is regrettable from every point of view — the Government of Quebec has not neglected it. Through its constant efforts in matters of education, it is preparing citizens who will be better equipped to carry out the tasks which the economy of the present day has a tendency to create. The Government knows that one of the best ways to fight unemployment is to raise the educational level of the population as a whole. Today we need competent specialists, technicians, and administrators. The Government which I have the honour to direct is aware of this — and is acting accordingly, because it is convinced that the education of the greatest possible number of citizens is an investment from which the whole community will profit. Thanks to the policy that we have adopted in this sphere, investors will be able to find the specialists that they need right here at home. A noticeable improvement has already begun to be felt in this regard. Thinking along these same lines, we are increasing the fitness of Quebec's population because of our policy in the sphere of social welfare and because of the steps which we have taken in the field of health. All the decisions taken, tied in with the increase in the level of education, will allow each citizen to develop completely as a human person, and will make him capable of taking a more active and efficient part in our economic and social life.

The brief description, I should say the very incomplete description which I have just given you of a few of the policies that the government has put into effect to cover urgent needs, has certainly caused several amongst you to wonder what part we intend to play from now on the economic and social life of the province. It is even possible that certain people are occasionally worried about present development, because they wonder which way we are going to turn.

In this connection, I would like to recall two things. The first is that in doing what it has done, the government was only fulfilling the wishes which had been expressed for a long time by our population. We have only assumed the responsibilities which the people wanted us to assume. The second is that, in this matter, the position of the government which I represent has never deviated. I have stated it on many occasions, and some of you who are attending this present meeting have heard me say it. I wish, nevertheless, to come back to it briefly today, because I realize, just as everyone who is present here, that the problem is one which is widespread and also one to which we must give a great deal of thought.

In this respect, I am sure that there is one fact that everyone will admit: the present government wants to assume the role that it should play in the economic as well as in the social sphere.

I mean it when I say, « the role that it should play », because I believe that this precision is of capital importance if we want fully to understand the meaning and the extent of government action. Otherwise, there is the risk of confusion and misunderstanding.

It is often said that modern economy has become so complex and so interrelated that government, whichever one it may be, should direct the economy according to a plan set up by its experts. In my opinion, this is not quite correct. It is true that problems are not as simple as they were – let us say, a century ago but this does not necessarily mean that the government must unilaterally become the great planner of economic progress. It should, rather, and this is the point of view of the administration which I represent — it should take part in the economic life of the country, because of the services which it can render to the community as a whole, – but it should do this in co-operation with private enterprise and not by imposing its views upon it in a dictatorial manner. In this way, economic progress becomes the result of joint action, and if the government takes part in it, it is not because it is pursuing the illusory and evil object of controlling all sectors of production, just for the sake of control and power, but because its presence and the special outlook that it has from its position give it a knowledge of events which allow it to render valuable service to its citizens, and to avoid problems that would otherwise unavoidably arise.

An example might perhaps make my point clearer. Everybody knows that the increased mechanization and automation in industry do help towards greater production. But this obvious advantage also has its bad points in the number of workers who are laid off because they do not have and cannot quickly acquire, the technical knowledge that would enable them to get a specialized job. Well, here is a difficulty which government can prevent or solve up to a point by providing the population with the required educational and technical training. But this is not enough: the government should be able, in co-operation with private enterprise, to direct the economy in such a way that it will be advantageous to both the investors and the population in general. In all this, we must never forget that what works to the detriment of the workers also works to the detriment of those who produce the goods intended to be consumed or used by the workers. When we say that today's economy is interrelated in its parts and components, this phenomenon is one of the main points of the question.

Another example. It happens occasionally that an industrial concern starts to open up some undeveloped part of the country. In order to do this, it must carry out several operations: build access roads, put up buildings, processing plants and I do not know what else.

Once all this preliminary work has been completed about three or five years later, what happens then to the hundreds or thousands of workers who have left their homes and their old jobs, and who are now settled in an isolated area of their province or their country, where their services are no longer required? A certain number of them may find work in the newly opened mine, in the processing plant that has been built, or in transporting the raw or semifinished product; but what about the others? When a development such as this takes place suddenly, when there is no planning to foresee its consequences, the whole community finds itself under the moral obligation of having to support a population for which private enterprise, because of its nature, is no longer responsible. There is no question here of blaming private enterprise, because its conduct is perfectly normal. However, the government which allows such things to happen without taking an interest in them, and especially without having foreseen them, even if this kind of thing does not happen too often, then that government, I say, should be held to blame.

This second example, like the preceding one, is a good illustration of what we mean when, speaking of government, we mention « the part that it should play ». This part can, be of greater or lesser extent, depending upon circumstances, but in the present world – and this is accepted by the majority of businessmen, industrialists and merchants – it cannot be non-existent. And if it is accepted in this way, it is precisely because these people have come to realize that the government can be a partner: – that it can, because of its position and its power, create an economic climate from which everybody will benefit.

Both here in the province of Quebec and elsewhere, I have already spoken about « democratic planning ». My colleagues have also spoken about it. Now, what we have talked about and what we have done to date in this regard is the complete opposite to planning of a dictatorial and unilateral kind. The government of Quebec does not want to dictate the economy, it has no intention of taking in hand the different sectors of the economy and it does not want to control the market. It is not interested in doing so, because it does not believe that this is its role. The government's general objective is the maintenance of a reasonable standard of living for the greatest possible number of citizens, the ordered acceleration of economic progress, the balanced localization of industries, and the prevention of those problems which this economic progress is likely to create. For these reasons, it is the duty of the government to get business concerns, and particularly those which have a large influence over the rest of the economy, to co-operate together and with the government in order to reach this objective. The advantages of this policy are perhaps less easy to see immediately, but in the end they become obvious, as can be seen in several western European countries.

If a spirit of co-operation such as this can dominate the relationship which should exist between government and private enterprise, there cannot be any harm. This is the spirit that my colleagues and I want to see prevailing in Quebec. In the course of its actions, the government will, however, and this is quite normal, have definite policies to apply. It will always apply them only with a full knowledge of the situation, and after having consulted those who are in the best position to give it advice. In other words, nobody needs fear that the government of Quebec will make decisions which are hasty or unjustified. You may also rest assured that no matter what may have happened or might happen elsewhere, the rights of Capital no more than those of Labour, no more than those of any other group of citizens, will be endangered. As long as the government which I represent is responsible for the administration of the province, it will establish its programme of action in co-operation with the interested parties, and in a complete spirit of justice.

Nous croyons jusqu'ici nous être engagés dans la bonne voie et nous recevons chaque jour des témoignages approbateurs. On sait où le gouvernement du Québec se dirige; on le sait soutenu par la population de la province et on l'encourage à compléter l'œuvre commencée.

Nous tirons, je l'admets, quelque fierté de la confiance qu'on nous manifeste aussi ouvertement. Cette confiance, qui ne s'est pas encore démentie et qui, nous l'espérons, ne se démentira jamais – car nous nous en tiendrons toujours, en matière économique, aux principes fondamentaux que j'ai énoncés il y a un instant – cette confiance, dis-je, nous incite à poursuivre nos efforts dans la voie que la population nous a tracée.

In this way, thanks to the co-operation of all the interested parties, Capital, Labour and Government, we will succeed in making Quebec the modern, industrialized, stable and happy province that it can become.