

We saw quite clearly, in the way the people of Québec participated in the national debate on the major economic issue of the recent campaign, to what extent the whole of Québec shares in the confidence we have in our capacity to meet the new challenges involved in the globalization of trade. Massively, Quebecers joined millions of Canadians who felt free trade is the assertion of the national will to open out rather than shutting ourselves in, of self-confidence rather than fear of new horizons.

Many fellow citizens, subjected for months to the whole gamut of arguments and counter arguments dealing with free trade had an opportunity to ask themselves whether that deal should go through. But in the final analysis, at the conclusion of a campaign centered on free trade, Canadians trusted a party that embodied and still embodies free trade. Under our system of parliamentary democracy, the mandate received by this Government on that matter could not be more decisive.

The question was debated in the widest possible forum, that of a general election, and the issue was settled by the electorate. It is now incumbent upon us to ratify an agreement that we invite all Canadians to support in order that, from the day it comes into force, it may be as productive as possible, to the benefit of all groups in our society, in every area of the country.

On the eve of the 21st century, with the advent of the large trading blocks which are being formed today, this country, largely dependent on external trade for its growth and welfare, is in vital need of economic space. Such space is available with the free trade agreement, providing us as it does with the widest possible access to the American market, the most sought-after market in the world.

In that respect, free trade is the only solution within immediate reach that meets our aspirations for sustained growth. In a sense, it is also the key to doing business with the rest of the world, to the extent that safe access to the various American markets will provide our businesses with economies of scale that often cannot be derived from Canadian sales, thereby putting them in a better position to successfully meet international competition on all other markets.

Those who over these last 20 years have been closely watching the extraordinary bloom of entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership among Canadian businesses both in the industrial and manufacturing sector and in

the area of services know full well we can now contemplate without any fears, doubts or reservations a free trade agreement with the United States.

What is in store is not only increased exports but also increased investments and, more generally, increased economic activity. This Agreement will benefit workers and consumers as a whole by creating jobs and increasing purchasing power.

The Agreement we are about to sign does not threaten in any way, directly or indirectly, our sovereignty. On the contrary, it specifically preserves political institutions as well as constitutional rules and regulations of each country in addition to guaranteeing full respect of the Canadian cultural identity, our way of life and our long-standing tradition of social justice.

Mr. Speaker, I will go so far as saying that the lack of an agreement would be more threatening to our sovereignty than a contract between two partners seeking together the best way to co-operate while respecting each other.

[*English*]

I would not want to conclude my remarks without a word on a most important issue for Québec as well as for Canada. I am referring, of course, to the necessary reinsertion of Québec within the Canadian constitutional family.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Loiselle: Under the leadership of our Prime Minister the agreement that has been reached at Meech Lake represents a unique achievement in the process of national reconciliation, and probably the opportunity of this century for our country to put to rest decades of confrontation and quarrels that have mobilized the country's time and energy.

The Meech Lake Accord sets the foundation for a new and stimulating era in which Canadians, freed from counter-productive and divisive constitutional dead ends, can start building the future. The opportunity is here now. It cannot, it must not be missed.

My very deep conviction is that the conditions and circumstances which resulted in the Meech Lake consensus and the following multipartite support of Parliament and of eight Legislative Assemblies are of a rare nature. That is why I remain confident that when all is said and done the superior interests of the country and its people will carry the day.