

The Address—Mr. Wilson

is that, to an ever-increasing extent, Quebeckers are wielding more power in *le monde des affaires*.

I am tremendously impressed with the capabilities of companies such as SNC, Lavalin, Bombardier, Provigo, National Bank of Canada, Credit Foncier and Paul Desmarais' Power Corporation. These and others like them are leaders in the Canadian business world. L'École des Hautes Études Commerciales is a respected business school across the continent. Quebec business has made its mark on the rest of Canada and in the world markets. These men have great pride in their achievements, and this is readily apparent in the self-confidence they have in their ability and the successes they have had to date.

What a tragedy it would be if Quebec were to opt for separation. For business to succeed, they must have a large domestic market. The Canadian market is not large enough but it is certainly much larger than the Quebec market, and to reduce the size of one's domestic market by three-quarters would be very damaging to the future success of growing medium-sized Quebec based companies. It is not the companies that I have mentioned that will be hurt; they have made their move, they are established in the world markets. It is the next generation who will suffer.

I realize that economic arguments will not necessarily have much impact on the vote on May 20. I can only view a Yes vote as being a futile and empty gesture in this context since Quebec companies and Quebec businessmen have achieved so much recently. It would be winning the battle of ten to 20 years ago while losing the war of the future.

All parties in the House, as well as all provincial governments, are committed to a renewal of federalism. We do not need a Yes vote to push us forward. Indeed, a Yes vote might well have the perverse effect of making agreement on a renewal of federalism more difficult to achieve. There is some real risk that there will be an adverse emotional reaction to such a vote.

Now, there is concern for the future, a sympathy for the Quebec position, and I believe that all the provinces agree that there must be changes. But a Yes vote, I believe, could well disrupt the negotiating posture of the different parties in future negotiations. The position of the government of Quebec, so long as it is represented by the Péquistes, is unclear. It is unclear what their negotiating posture will be. We cannot forget that they are committed to a breakup of this country, so that their position in any negotiations will certainly not be a constructive one.

As I have said, there has been much change to date. I have tried to illustrate this in the context of the business world to show Quebeckers that change can occur and can occur quickly. It has produced a stronger Quebec and in so doing has made Canada a stronger place. My hope is that Quebeckers will respond favourably to this and other examples to vote no in a strong way on May 20, for without Quebec in Canada it will be considerably harder for us both to reach our potential in the 1980s.

In closing, I urge the government to attach a much higher priority to fostering economic growth in the 1980s. This priority is sadly lacking in the Speech from the Throne. I have tried to approach this in a positive manner in my remarks. We cannot be all things to all people; we must set priorities. I believe it is clearly evident that if we do not establish a clear priority along the lines I have been advocating, it will be impossible to achieve our other broader social goals.

This government with its majority position has a great opportunity to rid Canada of the problems which developed in the 1970s. It is unfortunate that many of the same faces are on the government benches; I can only hope that they have learned that the old policies have not worked and that they will have a sufficient freshness of mind to expand their horizons to the benefit of all of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Gourd (Argenteuil): Mr. Speaker, it is for me a great honour to address this House as the member for Argenteuil. First I would like to congratulate all hon. members, new and old, for their election and I hope all of us as representatives of the people of Canada will be able to carry out our mandate with dignity. I share without reservation the enthusiasm of this House over the appointment of Madam Speaker, and I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that you will be able to discharge your responsibilities with wisdom and perseverance.

The history of this country has been strewn with highs and lows but we always have been able to overcome those crises and to better ourselves. But, Mr. Speaker, I think Canada is going through a difficult period, perhaps the most difficult in all our history. Indeed, at a time when the world economic situation is fragile, when the world political situation is under certain constraints, Canada, in addition to having to work hard and without respite to minimize the resulting adverse effects, must also face an internal political crisis. At a time when most governments in various countries can concentrate on strengthening their economies, the Government of Canada must also fight to keep the country united under a federal regime. And in spite of that, Mr. Speaker, I am confident and very optimistic about the future of this country because so far our economic performance—given the present state of the world—is the envy of several industrialized countries. Not only our economic performance, Mr. Speaker, but also our political system is the envy of several countries because we forget too often that nowhere in the world can one have as much freedom, whether it be the freedom of association, of movement, of expression and so on. How many foreigners dream about being able one day to set foot on our soil and say: I am going to start a new life here. How many?

● (1520)

Of course, that does not mean in any way that Canada cannot do better but it is in my opinion an undeniable indication of the validity of our federal system, of its strength and its