

The Address—Mrs. Duplessis

The Meech Lake Accord from the beginning for the Prime Minister was a political vehicle for the Prime Minister. He has made maximum political use of it. It has served its purpose. For we on this side of the House Constitutions matter. Our Party, as Hon. Members will know, has suffered great anguish in reaching the strong consensus we had that we should take Meech Lake seriously, that we should work on it and accept it and explain it to the country. We did that. But for the Prime Minister to value the Constitution one day and to tear it up the next is nothing that anyone should be surprised about. This is not a Prime Minister we have in the House today who is trusted by the Canadian people. He is a Prime Minister, and this is a Government that says one thing and does another.

In this case I was struck by the sentence about the Meech Lake Accord. It made it so obvious that the Government had nothing going to try to make a success out of something that we on this side of the House did and do take seriously. In spite of the words of the Hon. Member from British Columbia, I hope the rest of the country will be willing to see it saved as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate. The Hon. Member for Louis-Hébert.

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to join the debate on the Speech from the Throne which marked the opening of the second session of the 34th Parliament of Canada last April 3. I want to thank my constituents for expressing their confidence in me a second time.

I can recall with deep emotion the first time in 1984 when I rose to speak to Canadians in this venerable House. At the time I explained the four major objectives which had prompted me to run for election in Louis-Hébert under the banner of the Progressive Conservative Party. One of those objectives was that Québec become at last become a full-fledged member of the great Canadian constitutional family. I had faith in our Prime Minister who promised to bring Québec back into Canada's Constitutional fold, and the action he took during his first mandate proved me right.

Owing to his deep convictions and his negotiating skills he was able to secure the unanimous agreement of all his provincial colleagues about the Meech Lake Accord, a

historical achievement not only for Québec but for Canada as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that as a Québecer I stood very proud the day the Meech-Langevin agreement was signed. At long last Québec and all Québecers would regain their rightful place at the Constitutional bargaining table. The Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan) may not be in agreement, but yesterday he should have been listening to his colleague the Hon. Member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) who, for one, understands Québec's reality, understands Québecers, understands how Québecers feel.

That agreement that is good for Québec but above all essential to Canada's higher interests, and which was supported in this House by a majority of members both from the NDP and the Liberal Party, must be ratified without delay. What is at stake is not only Québec's future but the future of the whole Canadian Constitutional process.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, as a proud member from Quebec, I urge every man and woman in Ontario, Western Canada and the Maritimes to openly express their support for that most important agreement for our national unity and Canada's future.

It is imperative that it be ratified in the coming weeks by the two legislative Assemblies of New Brunswick and Manitoba, the only ones who have yet to do so.

As I said, and I can never insist enough on this, the ratification of that historic agreement is in line with Canada's higher interests. It involves our common future from East to West, the future of Canada.

Another theme of prime importance was raised to my great joy in the Throne Speech, that of research, science and technology.

The fact that that important, future-building area was again emphasized is another clear proof that this Government continues to view it as a priority.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have been concerned with high technology for a long time, and for a number of reasons. I was city councillor of Ste. Foy before I took active part in federal politics, and I had an opportunity to work at various matters of business for the City and the area, this gave me the opportunity to assess the importance of research and high technology for economic development in the riding of Louis-Hébert and the Quebec city area.