

*Free Trade*

the Government of Ontario. I want my friend to check the record. He is asking for debate and consultation and saying, don't do this before it is signed. The Auto Pact was debated in the House of Commons one and a half years after it was signed—

**Mr. Broadbent:** What did the Conservatives say at that time?

**Mr. Mulroney:** —and the Conservatives spoke on the Canada—U.S. Columbia River Treaty which was debated in Parliament under a previous Government three years after it was signed. Look at the difference, a Government that believes in Parliament and even believes in you, a Government that believes in the Premiers and the consultative process. That is why this free trade agreement is receiving growing support across the country.

The free trade agreement is very much about economic renewal. Recently I had the opportunity to review some of the events of the last six months, from June 3 to December 3, six months in the life of our country. Here is what our Government and this Parliament were called upon to consider: from June 3 to December 3, six months exactly, the Meech Lake Accord, the White Paper on National Defence, tax reform, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Western Canadian Diversification Initiative, the debate and vote on capital punishment, Sommet de la francophonie, the hosting of the British Commonwealth of Nations in Vancouver, the royal tour that Her Majesty made at the invitation of this Government, her first official tour into the Province of Quebec in 23 years, the free trade agreement and a national child care program. All of that was done in six months. Those are questions that speak to unity, to prosperity and to the sovereignty of Canada. I think that represents a record and a commitment with few parallels in the life of this House.

● (1130)

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

**Mr. Mulroney:** It is also worth noting that during that same period StatsCanada put out its report which indicated that during the three years of the life of this Government a million new jobs were created. It is even perhaps more important to point to the kinds of jobs, the quality of jobs, reversing completely previous trends. Yes, unemployment dropped from 12.7 to 8.2 per cent. Almost 90 per cent of the new jobs that were created were full time. No less importantly and for the first time, almost 60 per cent of those new jobs went to the women of Canada. Even with these results we still have one million people unemployed even though youth unemployment has dropped by over 5 per cent in the three years that we have been in office.

Trade is about jobs for our youth, economic prospects for Newfoundland and Labrador right through to the interior of British Columbia. Canada has done well. In the last three years unemployment has come down dramatically. The OECD

figures indicate that our employment growth is the highest rate of growth of the 24 industrialized nations of the world. It is good, but it is not good enough. We cannot say it is appropriate and adequate to have a million people unemployed and to have young people come on the job market, young men and women, without the kinds of prospects to which a generous, able and rich country should entitle them. That is what this resolution is about.

This resolution is about trade and it is about prosperity and about opportunity. If we have brought the rate of unemployment down from 12.7 per cent to 8.2 per cent, if it is true that a million new jobs have been created in three years and if the quality of those jobs have improved, it is still not enough, but the manner in which we bring it down even further is to trade our way to greater prosperity. To me, trade in the abstract means very little. Trade means jobs at home, jobs for our young people and that is why I have pursued it from the beginning with difficulty and through some great challenge. That is why I have not given up, because international trade and a bilateral trade agreement with the United States means thousands of new jobs at home in Canada.

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

**Mr. Mulroney:** The heart of the most important question is, at the end of the day exactly what kind of Canada, what kind of a country do we want?

All Members of the House have had to deal in the last six months of this year with some sensitive, challenging issues. We came together in a great statement of national affirmation and purpose and defined some fundamental issues, not without some difficulty, and set out a vision of Canada that said we had had enough of the evolution of two Canadas. We wanted one Canada, united, prosperous and strong. In my judgment the greatest hallmark of a united country is its tolerance. The greatest attribute of a civilized society has to be its sense of tolerance. So at the end of the day each of us in his or her mind will have to speak out about the kind of country and the kind of leadership he or she wants.

It is not good enough in 1988 to say that because the Government is in favour of this, I will tear it up and throw it away. That is not good enough anymore. If you are against this, you have to say what you are in favour of. If you are against the Meech Lake conception of Canada you have to speak out exactly about what kind of Canada you will define, what kind of leadership you will provide and what kind of a future our children will inherit.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we want a country that will be renowned for its competitive excellence, a country very much on the leading edge of all of the technologies, and a country capable of creating jobs. We have done that. Those jobs are very favourably distributed to women, to ethnic minorities in Canada, but it is not just enough to create jobs. They have to be stimulating and enriching jobs. For our youth we are looking for lasting prosperity for their tomorrows as