

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Chaput-Rolland, seconded by the Honourable Senator Doyle, for an Address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to Her Speech at the opening of the Session.—(*Honourable Senator Gigantès*). (*1st day of resuming debate*)

Hon. Philippe Deane Gigantès: Honourable senators, I yield temporarily to Senator Frith.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I asked Senator Gigantès to yield to me very briefly because I should like to make a comment about this debate.

I believe that we are departing from tradition—not from the rules but from tradition—in this place as it relates to the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session. As I recall it in the twelve years that I have been here, this debate usually consists of a motion proposed by a new member of the house on the government side and seconded by another member of the house on the government side. The wording of the address is, in part:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the Senate of Canada in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

The tradition has been that the debate which follows consists of speeches by the mover and seconder speaking about the Senate and often about their province—some information or a position taken by the province, that is, the senator's province, in general, and usually the speech is very non-partisan. For that reason the debate usually ends there.

I may be wrong—and I hope that I am, in a sense, but I do not think I am—but I do not ever remember the debate consisting of anything more than the contribution by the mover and the seconder, because it is usually of such a non-partisan nature that nobody has any trouble supporting it. Therefore, the opposition does not intercede in the debate.

However, in this instance the mover, Senator Chaput-Rolland, apparently provoked Senator Gigantès by some of the things that she said.

Senator Barootes: That's easy to do.

Senator Frith: I cannot say that Senator Gigantès needs to feel perfectly lonely about this, because, for example, Senator Chaput-Rolland said that she wants to say as clearly as she can that:

... when a majority of non-elected members believes that it has inherited a morality of decisions, then it does not serve its country nor its party very well.

I cannot imagine anyone in this Senate, other than all of the senators on this side who would be so described, who would be

in Senator Chaput-Rolland's mind. The only reason I am less provoked, perhaps, than Senator Gigantès is that I do not know what "inherited a morality of decisions" means. Maybe Senator Gigantès will be able to tell us what that means.

If we are breaking with tradition—maybe we want to—perhaps the address in reply should be more partisan and should launch a general debate on the Speech from the Throne. However, my recollection is that it never has before: I preferred it the other way. I hope that the more partisan nature of the address in this case was not meant to set the tone for the Parliament that we are now launching.

Senator Gigantès: Honourable senators, I should like to congratulate Senator Solange Chaput-Rolland for reviving the noble 17th Century oratorical tradition of the French cathedrals, where grammar, syntax and vocabulary were mixed with incense in adulatory addresses to the rich and powerful. Not since Bossuet, or Fénelon even, has language played such music for a ruler's ear. Laudable indeed is loyalty.

Less laudable, however, are professions of devotion to national reconciliation when they are adulterated by the uttering of inventions authored by those whose avowed aim is the breakup of Canada.

The invention in question is the one echoed by the Honourable Senator Solange Chaput-Rolland when she said that the promises made to Quebec during the 1980 referendum were not honoured by the government of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

The invention—the myth—is that to defeat the Péquistes in the referendum Mr. Trudeau promised to give Quebec a Meech Lake type of provincialist constitution, and that having defeated the separatists he reneged on his promise.

He did promise a renewed federalism, but it was unarguably clear from the very first, and throughout the referendum campaign, that he was promising what he eventually delivered with the Constitution of 1982, and nothing more.

Did Mr. Trudeau and his lieutenants deliberately allow the people of Quebec to mislead themselves into thinking that he had suddenly changed from being a believer in a strong national government to a proponent of more power for the "Billy Vander Zalms" or the "Sterling Lyons" of this world? Absolutely not.

Certainly, the late Mr. René Lévesque had no delusions about what Mr. Trudeau meant by "renewed federalism". In an interview printed by *Le Devoir* on May 16, 1980, four days before the referendum, Mr. Lévesque said that judging by

[*Translation*]

... some comments Trudeau made recently, ... the new formula (will) be as centralizing ... as ever.

[*English*]

This was not an attempt by Mr. Lévesque to distort the views of Mr. Trudeau and his government, apart from the fact that the late Premier of Quebec used the word "centralisateur" to describe the strong national government Mr. Trudeau wanted.