

*The Address—Mrs. Jacques**[Translation]*

Quebec's human potential will have to be put at the disposal of Canadians in order to contribute not only to our cultural heritage but also to our economy. In a new Progressive Conservative government, Quebec will be in a position, like the other provinces, to play a constructive role in the progress and prosperity of Canada.

[English]

With this new consensus, we must ensure that the economic isolation of certain regions ceases. The Canadian ethnic mosaic must be strengthened in our every day life and the respect of minorities must become part of the Canadian attitude.

[Translation]

As was emphasized in the Speech from the Throne, unemployment is now Canada's most critical national challenge. That social phenomenon is indeed a tragedy for all Canadians. It is imperative that we make every effort to develop and implement effective strategies designed to promote job opportunities and make it possible to prepare new employment programs. I intend to concentrate on that issue along with all my colleagues here.

More specifically, I intend to work towards improving the lot of unemployed youths who are unjustly victimized by the current economic conditions. Over the next few years, we will have to do our utmost to find solutions which will enable young Canadians to take their place on the labour market.

Stopgap measures are no longer good enough. Young people must be able to look forward to lasting and challenging employment. Youth unemployment has been the source of too many disillusionments and frustrations. That situation must change. We are morally duty-bound to tackle the issue now so that all young Canadians will regain faith in their country. Canada's future is at stake.

With regard to social justice, one must consider the role of women in Canadian society and their rightful claim to equality for which they have been striving for many years.

Today there is still a wide gap between the principle of equality, which is widely endorsed, and its day-to-day application. It is up to us, women Members of Parliament, to be vigilant and work to ensure that this principle becomes a daily reality.

● (1130)

We shall have to step up our efforts to increase job opportunities for women in the public service and the private sector, and to improve the daycare services offered to working mothers, to name but a few.

Of course, equality between men and women implies economic equality, but it also affects a multitude of other issues that are of daily concern to Canadian women. We must immediately get down to work to meet the legitimate aspirations of Canadian women.

In the coming months, our government will consider important legislative proposals which, if adopted, will improve the quality of life for Canadian women, for instance by repealing the provisions of the Indian Act which discriminate against native women, by bringing about a major reform of the Divorce Act to make it easier for a couple, to go through this often painful stage in their life, by legislating in order to eliminate pornography and television content picturing sexual violence and exploitation, by agreeing to measures designed to increase assistance to the victims of violence within the family, and by implementing, in co-operation with the provincial governments, a national system to facilitate the enforcement of maintenance orders involving Canadian women. As parliamentarians, we must see to it that these aspirations are met. We must ensure that Canadian women can feel not only the dignity and the pride of womanhood, but also that of being full-fledged Canadian citizens.

When we speak about social justice, we also refer to senior citizens. With the assistance of my colleagues, I intend to improve the conditions and quality of life of our seniors. We must allow them to continue to remain independent and to protect their privacy and their freedom while meeting their basic needs. We must ensure them a decent income, adequate housing, appropriate health care and services, and recreational and other activities adapted to their needs. Let us give back to our seniors the dignity, the pride and the joy of being alive.

They are not just great citizens, they are also great builders of this country. They deserve all of our respect and consideration.

There are also our mentally and physically handicapped citizens. Although some progress has been achieved these past few years, we must keep on enhancing their quality of life. They must become independent, full-fledged citizens notwithstanding their physical or mental handicaps. If we can guarantee them standards conducive to a proud and decent way of living, if we give them the chance to contribute to our society, they will become better Canadians.

I have the privilege of being here in this House because the people in Montreal-Mercier elected me on September 4 to represent them in our Parliament. I would like to say a few words about this constituency where I was born and raised, and where I still have my residence.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency of Montreal-Mercier is located on the easternmost part of Montreal Island, in the Province of Quebec. It is limited to the South by the St. Lawrence River, to the North by the Rivière des Prairies and it extends from Tétraultville to the West to Pointe-aux-Trembles on the East End of the island; it has an area of some 41 square kilometres.

My riding includes several petroleum plants as well as one petrochemical complex, which defines it as an industrial area,