

*The Address—Mr. Masse*

this respect by the drop in oil prices. As the November 1 target date draws closer, I will see to it that we take a truly consistent approach bearing in mind the fact that producers must have ready access to bigger markets, while guaranteeing competitive Canadian prices and adequate supplies for the foreseeable future.

In a series of measures—the Western Accord, the Atlantic Accord, the agreement on gas, the abolition of the PGRT, and our approach to such major projects as Husky's in Lloydminster—we always looked upon the development of our energy resources as a means to unite the country. Among other things, we acknowledge the vital role of the provinces in the implementation of coherent energy policies.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I might point out in passing that the World Energy Conference ends today in Cannes, France. Earlier this morning, on behalf of Canada and all Canadians, I had the pleasure of extending an invitation to all participants to come to Montreal in 1989 to continue their discussions. More than 3,000 delegates from the world over will then meet to debate world energy issues.

Mr. Speaker, Canada must also be able to benefit from its plentiful mineral resources to sustain its growth. In this respect I have a particular interest in our asbestos industry. The human cost of the sharp decline in this sector over the past decade is unacceptable to this Government. The labour force dropped from 8,000 to 3,000. Five thousand workers lost their jobs, practically all of them in a region located within my riding. Mr. Speaker, I have seen the heartbreaks and sufferings caused by this crisis.

The Government of Canada gives priority to the asbestos issue because, like most countries and international organizations, it believes that the use of asbestos fibres is not only safe but desirable if adequate controls are in place. The European Economic Community shares our views. International Labour Organization officials endorsed this position a little over three years ago despite the fact that they were fully aware that asbestos workers are undoubtedly those who suffered most from the lack of adequate safety standards.

We have made strong representations on the international scene since September 1984, particularly to the American Environmental Protection Agency.

After my recent trip to Washington, Mr. Speaker, the EPA finally gave up under pressure and agreed to review the figures on which its recommendation to ban asbestos was based, figures which I described as being vague, incomplete and contradictory. I have now every reason to hope that the asbestos issue will not end on a sour note.

The asbestos issue, which is so significant for my own constituency, naturally brings me to speak about Quebec. I pointed out in my introduction how much the themes of the inaugural speech seem to correspond to the needs of modern Quebec. Let me explain.

Throughout the years, Quebec has developed, as was its prerogative, one of the best, if not the best social security system in America. Therefore, when the Government of Canada makes, as it has done, a commitment to improve the system for which it is financially and administratively responsible, Quebecers can only approve. When we state that established rights will be maintained, we are assuring Quebecers and all Canadians that we are pursuing our objective of equity. However, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has said, this equity must essentially rely on our collective production of wealth. It is impossible to distribute continuously what we are not producing. In this perspective, the action of the Government has two major thrusts: to slow down the deficit and, at the same time, to stimulate the growth of our collective wealth. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention an important figure.

Since the general election of September 1984, 25 months ago, 120,000 jobs have been created in Quebec alone, for an average of over 4,800 new jobs a month.

The significance of these figures stands out even more if we make a comparison. In the 55-month period before the election, the Liberal Government had created only 41,000 jobs in Quebec. In other words, since 1984, the actions of this Progressive Conservative Government have created three times as many jobs in half the time.

I have no intention to gloat, Mr. Speaker. The Progressive Conservative Government knows better than anyone that there remains a lot to be done in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

We are also aware that the time is past when Governments thought they could solve everything by imposing their own will. The Prime Minister described the statement of this Government as a speech of continuity, and he is right. The Government wants to continue and will continue to stimulate the economy by allowing creativity and initiative to find its expression throughout Canada.

There is in Quebec a new generation just as creative as the previous one, but it has other ways to express itself. It is a generation of business women, entrepreneurs, administrators and intellectuals who are developing new relationships between industry and the academic world. This generation has only one message: Let us express our creativity, our taste for invention and our business sense, and we shall give Quebec the economic vitality it was about to lose. This generation does not want to go backward, but forward. It does not want to rehash social or linguistic facts, but to express another kind of vitality. It has said to the State: Thank you very much, we will operate in French, we will preserve our social security schemes, however we are prepared also to assume our responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, I like to think that one of the first political initiatives of this generation was to end the Liberal era in 1984 and elect a young government which can understand its needs for expression and appreciate its competence.

I wish to pay tribute to the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada; born in Quebec, he is the perfect