

No loss for Quebec

¹³² Premier Bourassa has done the wise thing in withdrawing his request to speak at the opening session of the summit of francophone governments in Paris.

The waning of overtly nationalist sentiment in Quebec, capped by the election of Mr. Bourassa's pragmatic Liberals last year, seemed to have put paid to the unseemly squabbling over precedence that had hobbled Quebec-Canada-France relations for almost two decades.

Suddenly, the brewing dispute between the new premier and Prime Minister Mulroney, who maintained he would be the sole Canadian to address the session, threatened a revival of the quarrels.

Mr. Bourassa's acquiescence is nicely judged. He stuck to his guns long enough to

make his point, and now has withdrawn in plenty of time to appear statesmanlike. By so doing, he has avoided risking a collapse of the summit; previous ones have died aborning on the question of precedence.

Mr. Bourassa knows that participation in these summits, even in a slightly junior capacity, means more to Quebec than wrapping itself in the *fleur de lys* flag and having no summit at all. Quebec has more to gain from the creation of a healthy international francophone organization than from diplomatic squabbling.

The premier has also taken a significant step toward ensuring that a second summit is held in Quebec City — with himself front and centre as host. Far from losing a tussle with the feds, he has made himself and Quebec look like winners.