

*The Address—Right. Hon. Brian Mulroney*

In these circumstances the Government devoted considerable effort to rebuilding the national and economic foundations of Canada. With regard to the Meech Lake Accord, I salute the leaders of the other political parties in this Chamber for their leadership on the sensitive national issue—the Meech Lake Accord took the first critical steps with regard to restoring Quebec to the constitutional fold.

Destructive energy policies that had ravaged western Canada so unfairly for so long were dismantled, and new energy accords were reached in the West, the North, and the Atlantic region.

New approaches to regional development were implemented and critical resource sectors such as energy and agriculture were assured of greater equity. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I sit next to the Minister of Agriculture—the Minister of other things as well, it all depends on the day—I sit next to a Minister of Agriculture whose Department was responsible, in four years, for increasing aid to farmers in Canada by an amount in excess of 400 per cent. That is a commitment to the farmers of Canada.

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

**Mr. Mulroney:** The degree of Government intervention in the economy was considerably reduced. Crown Corporations, which no longer served a public policy role, were privatized. Corporate and personal income tax systems were reformed in an equitable manner to meet the needs of a modern and competitive economy.

Legislation was passed which improved substantially the economic framework within which individual Canadians and Canadian companies were called on to operate on an individual basis and to become more competitive with their counterparts both in the United States and around the world.

In a large measure, these initiatives resulted in the country's strong economic performance. After years of languishing at the bottom of the heap in terms of productivity gains, since 1985 Canada has made very solid improvements. Last week this did not receive eight column headline attention, but it should have. It is a most significant indicator of the national well-being in terms of our capacity to grow, to sell, and to create jobs. Last week Statistics Canada revealed that in 1988 Canadian labour productivity showed an impressive improvement of 2.9 per cent.

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

**Mr. Mulroney:** Productivity is a dull, unglamorous thing that does not attract much attention from our friends in the Opposition. All it has to do with is the well-being of Canada and the future of jobs for our youth. If it does not mean much to some, it means a great deal to people on the Government benches.

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

**Mr. Mulroney:** Productivity is the key to competitiveness and prosperity. It is the key to greater market shares and more jobs. It is the only way our products will be accepted internationally, being sold around the world, and thereby creating jobs at home. They do not buy our products because of the colour of our eyes or the cut of our jib. They buy them if they are of good quality and produced at internationally competitive prices. Productivity growth had been arrested for so long in Canada that our economy was gravely debilitated. All Canadians from all political parties should take pride in the fact that Canada's productivity growth is now coming back because it means better days for Canada, and in particular it means jobs for Canada's youth.

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

**Mr. Mulroney:** This one example in large measure can make a point: sound management of the economy works out in the end to be better for everyone, business, labour, and consumers alike.

I was interested to listen to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday referring to big business and the Conservative Party. I represent a constituency called Charlevoix, which includes my home town of Baie Comeau. It is populated largely by paper mill workers, people who work in aluminum factories, people who drive cabs and work hard. There are no big businessmen to speak of around. The Conservative candidate in that riding won almost 80 per cent of the vote. That means we are supported by the ordinary Canadians, the people who know what good Government is all about.

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

**Mr. Mulroney:** Our vision for the future set out in our first two Throne Speeches resulted in the signing and ratification of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, an agreement which represented a trade policy to be sure, but a little more for our nation because it is a statement about Canada and its people, about their outward, open, competitive view of the world, a world which is increasingly interdependent and in which Canadians want to play a full part.