

*The Address*

• (1305)

Of course he does not believe that. I ask him to examine a little more closely his thesis that where one lives in the country makes no difference.

I submit that it makes a whole lot of difference. For example, it makes a difference in the ability of one to work in construction activity. I would suggest that it would have been much more difficult three days ago to do construction activity when it was -30 degrees in Ottawa than in Newfoundland where it was 12 degrees above that day.

**Mr. Solberg:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has raised a couple of issues.

First, he wants to know whether unemployment insurance as it is presently constituted has been a boon or a problem in the country.

Certainly the premier of Newfoundland would suggest that as it is presently designed it has not served the interests of Newfoundlanders very well. He points to the fact that a generation of people have become dependent on unemployment insurance as it is now. That is not only an economic tragedy but a human tragedy. We must work quickly to change that so that we can save yet another generation from that type of situation.

It is very important to recognize that there is a great difference between an insurance program that puts the onus on individuals to show that they are trying to stay in the work force and setting up different benefits depending on the unemployment rate in particular areas of the country.

I point out that before regionally extended benefits we had unemployment rates in Newfoundland of around 7 per cent. Since we have regionally extended benefits they have gone up, up and up to 20 and 25 per cent. It is very important that we not ignore the lessons of history lest we be doomed to repeat them.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member's time has expired. Before recognizing the hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata, I think the hon. member for Bellechasse has something to say, am I right?

**Mr. Langlois:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I want to rise on a point of order. The next speaker for the Official Opposition is the hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata. Like every woman sitting in this House, she is very active and only sickness or some mishap would slow her down just a little. Unfortunately, she broke her ankle during the weekend. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you to show some leniency and allow the hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata to stay seated while she makes her speech.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I can assure the hon. member that I see no problem whatsoever. Now, the hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak today in this House, the symbol of Canadian democracy.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all members of this House who were elected or re-elected, especially the right hon. Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Calgary Southwest.

My first words will be directed to the constituents of the riding of Rimouski—Témiscouata. I want to thank them for the confidence that they have shown me by choosing me to represent them in the House or that they have expressed to me since I was elected. I will do everything I can to meet their expectations and they can count on my co-operation for any individual or collective project that could contribute to their well-being.

My speech will be made up of two parts. In the first part, I want to remind you of the reasons that brought me to Ottawa and, in the second part, I want to express some comments and questions I have about certain aspects of the Department of Canadian Heritage, of which I am the official critic for the opposition. I will come right to the heart of the subject by reminding you, Mr. Speaker, that you have before you a true sovereignist, one who is determined to work relentlessly in order to defend Quebec's interests. You have before you a sovereignist who, on behalf of the people of Rimouski—Témiscouata, feels that she has the legitimate right to be here in order to claim what is owed to that region and to see to it that it is treated fairly.

• (1310)

Whether the Prime Minister or the hon. member for Calgary Southwest and their parties like it or not, I came here to speak about Quebec sovereignty.

I came here to fight for the MRCs of Mitis, Témiscouata and Rimouski—Neigette and their 37 municipalities in my riding which includes Rimouski, the regional capital of eastern Quebec. Besides government services, you can find in Rimouski one university, the Institut national de recherche scientifique en océanographie, the Institut de marine, one CEGEP, the Quebec Telephone head office, the Rimouski regional hospital and the archdiocesan offices.

I am also here to fight for the five eastern Quebec ridings and all Quebecers.

I stand here as an advocate of Quebec sovereignty. I grew up in Montreal, started a teaching career in Laval University in Quebec City and spent the last 25 years working in a region that honoured me by making me their elected representative. That region is well known for its vibrant cultural life, but it is plagued with deep and lingering economic problems. Up to a few years ago, the citizens there thought they could count on vital communication links for its development, but it had to weather a