

The Address—Ms. Hunter

notwithstanding clause is bad and that we should seek ways to get rid of it? Or does she accept the policy enunciated by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Bouchard) to the effect that the notwithstanding clause is necessary and should be kept in the Constitution? Could she give us her opinion on this issue?

Mrs. Duplessis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) for his question. I should like to tell him that a long time ago the Prime Minister had stated that the inclusion of the notwithstanding clause had weakened the Constitution, and if my Hon. friend had read yesterday's *Le Devoir* he would know that the reason his former leader, Mr. Trudeau, had included the notwithstanding clause in the Constitution was really to have control and to be able to weaken the Constitution if ever something happened which was not to his liking.

The right was granted and the notwithstanding clause was included in the Constitution. As a Québec Member, I can understand why Premier Bourassa would use that clause since it already was in the Constitution. I think that the Prime Minister and the Provincial Premiers figure they will soon be able to discuss that item during new constitutional rounds, but they won't be able to do so until the Meech Lake Accord is ratified by all provinces. That's the important issue here.

I would like to add, as a Member for Québec, that having been excluded of that famous night of negotiations, you remember when Mr. Lévesque showed up here, sincerely wishing to enter the new Canadian Constitution—You remember that the province of Québec was cast aside. Try to imagine how the people of Québec felt, try to put yourselves in their shoes. The people in Québec are saying: We were then excluded, and now two provinces in Canada don't want to see Québec in the Constitution. Try to imagine what could happen. Yesterday, my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) went even further! We are faced with a dangerous situation, which could lead to the separation of one province. And that would be the end of Canada. Mr. Speaker, it is very hard to make our English-speaking colleagues understand the situation, because they don't want to hear anything about it. That is the fact, and that is what each and every ordinary citizen of Québec believe.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, we should not try to find out if it was a good idea to include the notwithstanding clause in the Constitution. Right now, Mr. Speaker, the entire population of Canada should unify and put pressure on the two provinces who haven't yet signed the Accord, because that's what is important.

• (1420)

[English]

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand today in the House to respond to the Government's Speech from the Throne. First, let me take this opportunity to thank the people of Saanich—Gulf Islands for electing me to represent them. It is an honour to serve as a Member of Parliament and a privilege to represent a riding of such natural beauty. The Gulf Islands of Canada have a reputation for their beauty as well as for their arts community and vibrant political community.

The Saanich Peninsula is a farming area and a bedroom community to Victoria. The daffodils we see from the Canadian Cancer Society come from my riding.

As a new Member of Parliament I am not unaware that a Speech from the Throne will be a blueprint for government policy. However, this Speech from the Throne is unusually devoid of real substance. However, it also contains some worrying signals.

The Government has bent over backward to sell the idea that Canada is in an economic crisis. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) is busily speaking to business groups across the country, telling them of the doom and gloom on the horizon. It is interesting to contrast these new found sentiments with the rhetoric we were exposed to during the last election campaign.

At that time the Government said all was well with the economy and that we should stay the course. The Government claimed it was fiscally responsible and that the trade deal would not negatively affect our social programs or regional development initiatives. We now see the real agenda.

The announced cuts to unemployment insurance are a direct result of the trade deal. During the election campaign we on this side warned that the deal would adversely affect our social programs. With the announced cuts to unemployment insurance, the harmonization has begun.