

electing you, Mr. Speaker. To me it was a historic gesture and a wise reform that will serve Parliament and Canada well.

I was proud to be able to appoint this committee, and as Prime Minister, I endorsed all its recommendations. The new procedure whereby the Speaker is elected, the scrutiny of appointments by Governor in Council by the standing committees—here we have a major opportunity for the Opposition to question Government appointees. We have had appointments where the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston) had the dignity, the great dignity to say that although perhaps partisan, the appointment was a very good one, in referring to Mrs. Windsor.

It was an opportunity to bring these people before the parliamentary committees, and to do so instead of making acrimonious statements in the House. We are using this new procedure to ask Canadian men and women to appear before the Members of this House.

I urge the Opposition and in fact all Members to make use of this instrument, which enhances the independence, powers, resources and responsibilities of the standing committees of the House. Private Members will have greater influence and independence as a result of these changes in the powers of committees and in the way private Members' Bills are dealt with, and also through opportunities for representations to the Board of Internal Economy.

This Government had made a commitment, in fact several... we are getting there, a basic commitment which may not be headline news, but it directly concerns the core and cornerstone of our democracy, namely the House of Commons, and as Prime Minister, I had the privilege of appointing this tripartite committee and endorsing each of its recommendations, and I think that perhaps not today, but in the years to come, when we look back... I think parliamentarians and Canadians will look at the McGrath Report and say: We had then a Prime Minister, a Government and a Parliament who were trying to improve our parliamentary system, and I think that is something to be proud of, Mr. Speaker!

[English]

It is true, Mr. Speaker, that two years ago we set objectives for national reconciliation, economic renewal, social justice and constructive internationalism. These are matters of great substance. If you are successful with regard to these, you conclude with a noble vision of Canada. It means you have done a job for Canadians. What could be more noble than those four principles that we set out? I will admit, Mr. Speaker, that in the minds of some it lacks the panache of a big society, a just society, a good society, a good deal, a fair deal or a big deal. But what this does is, it represents solid and substantial accomplishment for all Canadians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: My Right Hon. friend is quite right when he says that we ought to take a look at the record. I agree with him. We have never said that the record would be perfect. We

never campaigned on a platform of perfection. The Liberals had that market cornered. All we said was that we would work hard in a serious, sustained way to try to improve the lot of all Canadians.

National reconciliation deals with federal-provincial relations. What have we done? We have annualized First Ministers Meetings; we have quarterly meetings on trade with provincial participation. For the first time the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) arranged to have provincial representatives along with him in a federal delegation at the meetings of GATT in Uruguay.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: As to historic ERDA agreements, over 100 have been signed. Four billion dollars has been put together in joint programs with federal and provincial governments; the Western, the Atlantic and the Nova Scotia Accords.

[Translation]

The final solution to the problem, the ultimate solution to the eternal problem of French-speaking people—and I come at the right time to say more about this—which problem has been disturbing Quebec and Canada for two decades because Quebec was told: You Quebec Francophones will heed only the guidelines laid down by Ottawa. We, the Government in Ottawa, will tell you what to do. As a result our relations with one of our mother countries, France, nearly broke up. The Government which I have the honour to lead with the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) and others found a formula not only to solve the eternal problem of French-speaking people but to do so with every consideration for Canadian unity, and so we attended the first summit of French-speaking people and the second will take place here in Canada, in Quebec City.

[English]

Federal-provincial relations are very important, Mr. Speaker. In my judgment they are the laboratory of a federal state within which great things can happen; economic progress, social progress? Nothing can happen when the well is poisoned. Anyone who stands up here and tells you he has all the answers has a real problem. Anyone who tells you that he can run this country by issuing directives from 24 Sussex Drive has a very poor understanding of Canada. It is tough. It is difficult. The easy way is to issue directives. The easy way is to say it is going to be Ottawa's way and that is it. The tough way is to take the time to listen, to take the time to meet, to understand the regions and to respect their points of view. It lacks the panache. It lacks the headlines of the brutality of saying you are going to do it my way. It takes patience, it takes respect and it takes skill. That is what we are doing because it works and it is good for Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!