

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: I stand for a new approach to education that respects traditional rights but that sets standards that allow our children to keep up with their counterparts abroad who continue to move swiftly ahead of many of our Canadian children in schools.

[*Translation*]

I stand for a Canada whose basic characteristics and values are reflected in a modern Constitution, supported by all Canadians. It is the Canadian people, the concrete and steel of our national existence, who can hold this country together.

We are living through a historic moment of extraordinary and beneficial change in the world. In Eastern Europe, the dead weight of communist ideology is being rejected by people eager for the freedoms and responsibilities of democracy and free markets. In Western Europe, progress towards political and economic integration is accelerating.

In 1992, 340 million Europeans will complete their reorganization into a single market. In 1994, the Europeans are planning to set up one European central bank. By 1999, the Europeans plan to create a common currency.

In Canada, we have had a common market since 1867. We have had a common currency since 1870. We have had one central bank since 1934. We already have much of what the Europeans are now trying to build.

In Europe, the movement is inexorably towards political and economic integration and unambiguously away from the sovereignty of individual nations. Indeed, as EC president Jacques Delors has predicted: «Eighty percent of all economic and social legislation» in Europe will eventually originate in Brussels, and not in national capitals such as Paris, London or Rome.

Surely, the direction could not be clearer. In voluntarily relinquishing sovereignty, in many vital areas, European Governments are reversing the trend of centuries.

They are making these historic reforms because they believe in them. Surely, French President François Mitterrand is one of the main architects and leader of all those changes in Europe. Why did he make this choice? Because he believes that, in the competitive world which

is emerging, greater unity and more integration will raise the standards of living of their people and provide them with greater economic opportunity and greater social justice.

[*English*]

The most powerful economy in the world, the United States, is a federation and the richest market in the world, the European Community, is on a rapid and determined course toward economic and political integration.

There would appear, Mr. Speaker, to be little discernible advantage for Canadians who already enjoy the benefits of federalism to turn their backs on that system at the very moment that it has become most attractive to growing numbers of nations. Helmut Kohl, Margaret Thatcher, and François Mitterrand, and the leaders of 340 million Europeans and others who seek to join are moving more and more towards an integrated economy, more and more towards the equivalent of a political federation. We have that fundamental here and yet some are asking us to chuck it out and replace it with something that has yet to be defined. I say we have something good. Let us build on it. Let us improve it, and let us make it better for all Canadians.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Canada's system of government has been beneficial to every province and to all Canadians. But our system is far from perfect. It has given rise to demands for fairer representation and calls for more responsive administration. One hears the call for help from western Canada, and from the east. One hears it in Ontario, in the north, and elsewhere.

Canada has also heard statements of hope and expressions of despair from many Quebecers. All are genuine. This problem must be dealt with. It is not going to go away. It is time to consider making reforms to our system of government, bold and far-reaching and unprecedented, if need be.

But to build a new and better Canada does not mean, however, asking our fellow citizens, French speaking or English speaking, to abandon the gains of a century to fight the tides of history and to put their hopes in an uncertain and narrowing future. I believe that we have within our grasp the possibility of rebuilding one of the