

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

History will represent this free trade agreement as the most important achievement and turning point in the progress of this nation in this entire century.

Ms. McDonald: Madam Speaker, I have seldom heard such overblown rhetoric and departure from the substance of the text. I have seldom heard such PR, wishful thinking and such an attempt to mislead Canadians.

However, the Minister did say one thing that I believe is correct and which the Minister of Communications and Culture (Miss MacDonald) has not had the nerve to say. It is to concede that culture was indeed on the table and negotiated away. The Minister has basically described the kind of situation our workers in cultural industries, including artists, writers, composers, film makers and so on, will face. He said they can compete in the world. Of course, they can compete if they want to make a film in Canada in which they change the street signs and licence plates to make it look like the United States or sometimes another place to sell the film somewhere else. If they want to sell Harlequin romances, they can do that in the world. However, if they want to make something distinctly Canadian for which we need a structure of support because we are a small country, those cultural supports will be gone in this trade deal. The Minister was frank enough to admit that.

Mr. McDermid: That is nonsense and you know it.

Ms. McDonald: Look at his remarks in the "blues". He said that artists can compete in the world. Of course they can compete.

I want to ask the Minister a specific question concerning his remarks early in his speech. He suggested that those of us who have a different vision for Canada, who are working very hard to defeat this trade deal, are somehow motivated by fear and it is only his side that has confidence.

Before the election the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) were against the trade deal. Did he ever correct the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance and say they are operating out of fear and do not have confidence in Canada? Why did he not make that kind of speech in favour of free trade before the last election? Why did the Hon. Minister not oppose his own Party Leader, the Prime Minister of Canada, and tell him that he did not have the right way of organizing the Canadian economy? Why was he not in favour of this before the election?

Does it not come down to the issue of trust. The Government, which is now using free trade and wants to sell out Canada, never stood for that in an election campaign. It is like the sacred trust. The Government tells us that social programs are not in the deal. They are in the deal and I will speak about that shortly. In the last election the same Government described social programs as a sacred trust. Immediately after the election the Government deindexed the family allowance and tried to deindex the old age pension. Fortunately, seniors rose up against the Government, as Canadians will rise up against it in the next election to defeat the trade deal.

Mr. Siddon: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the questions although not necessarily the comments by the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) because they were so silly.

We talk about our sovereignty and cultural programs. The Hon. Member knows that there are clear provisions in the agreement to ensure that special provisions in legislation to protect our cultural industries are maintained.

I was saying that as a proud and confident Canadian I have no hesitancy in going out to share my culture with the world and turn it into something which we can all celebrate, which can bring economic benefit throughout the world. Canada, instead of being a small-minded, closed nation which protects every little thing from world reality, takes what we are so proud of and sells it. That is exactly the reason for this free trade agreement. We can become whole Canadians, not just petty negative backward looking Canadians as some would advocate.

Ms. McDonald: Why did you not say that in the last election campaign?

Mr. Siddon: The Hon. Member has been here long enough to know that as we research and study issues of national dimension, as we receive reports such as that which came from the Macdonald Commission, and as we do our homework and analyse the realities which I projected in my speech, we will learn about the benefits of an agreement of this historic dimension. This agreement can enhance our ability to add value to our natural resources, to market our professional skills, to market our social and cultural programs which the world should have and emulate. We can only do that by being in the real world, not shutting ourselves off from it.

Indeed, I, the Prime Minister and all Members of the Government are confident because when we travel this country we see smiling faces and optimistic people who tell us to put this through because they want it for their children. That is why we are engaged in this historic exercise that we will conclude shortly.

Mr. Foster: Madam Speaker, I was very impressed by the Minister's comment that the softwood lumber deal had stabilized the softwood lumber industry. It certainly stabilized the softwood lumber industry for about three plants in northern Ontario which immediately shut down when the deal went through in January, 1986, and laid off over 400 workers.

He would be interested to know that in his own province the Pas Lumber Company was almost put out of business when the Government of that province transferred the export tax of 15 per cent to a stumpage charge. The stumpage charge for the Pas Lumber Company in Prince George went from \$6.3 million a year to \$19 million a year. Now the British Columbia Government is trying to reduce that stumpage charge and the United States is opposing it. That deal, which was bad at the outset, has been entrenched in the free trade deal. Now we have to run to Washington every time we want to do something about our stumpage charges.