

Time Allocation

I think it is very clear that whatever Canadians had in mind in voting for the Conservative Party, it was not because they wanted to give it a mandate to negotiate any kind of comprehensive free trade deal with the United States. Therefore, I do not think it is very credible for the Minister for International Trade to say in this House that because his Party won a majority in the last election it can push this trade deal through this House and down the throats of the Canadian people without any real or meaningful debate or study. That is what he is saying to this House but I do not think Canadians agree with that in any way, shape or form.

● (1640)

The Minister and his colleagues claim this matter has been debated for over two and a half years. However, the Minister himself made clear that could not be correct because he said the negotiations for the deal started two and a half years ago. The elements of the deal were tabled in the House on October 6, and the full text of the deal was made available only last December. He then said, and this is perfectly true, that the Bill to implement the deal was only presented to this House last May 24. That means that whatever was going on over the past two and a half years, it was not debate in this Parliament or in this country on this trade deal which Bill C-130 asks us to accept and put in force to damage this country in perpetuity.

If the Minister and the Government really had any intention of allowing a proper debate and a study of this Bill, they would not have choked off debate on second reading after only five days. They would not have choked off committee proceedings after three weeks. They would not now be trying to choke off report stage and third reading debate after only four days. Apart from the committee hearings, that means they want to allow only eleven days of debate in the House of Commons on what is the most important measure to come before Parliament in the history of this country. It speaks to the very future, the very existence of this country in days to come, but for them eleven days is too much. The Minister talked about the decision of the British Parliament on the entry of the U.K. into the European Common Market. If I am not mistaken, before that debate there was at least one election and one referendum.

The Minister and the Government are afraid to let Canadians decide in a general election whether they want to have this deal and that government. The Government knows that if there were ever to be an election, as there must be before this deal goes into effect, the Canadian people will say no to this deal because they know it means the undermining of their future and the future of their children. They would say no to this deal because they know it is the product of an incompetent and inept government and is a prime example of its lack of sincerity and credibility.

We have said we believe there must be an election with a resulting majority vote for the Government before this deal can be implemented. That is why we have asked our Senate

colleagues not to block it, not to defeat it, but simply to postpone a final decision on this matter until the Canadian people have had a chance to speak in an election. That is why in our response to the inquiry as to whether we would agree to time allocation on this Bill we said there should be a sufficient number of days allocated, yes, over 300, to bring the debate past the time when this Parliament must end so there could be no final decision on this measure until the Canadian people have had the chance to speak during an election.

Let us be very clear that in approaching the opposition Parties to see if there could be an agreement on time allocation, the Minister was only going through the motions. As the Speaker made clear in a ruling earlier today, the statement of the Minister on behalf of the Government that agreement on time allocation could not be reached has to be accepted at face value. It cannot be looked at, it cannot be probed. Therefore, it is clear from what the Minister for International Trade just said in the House, the Deputy Government Leader, in spite of what he said in opening this debate, was only going through the motions, and the Government never intended from the beginning to allow a proper study, a proper debate, either in this House or in this country on its trade deal.

Why not? Because it knew that the more this measure was studied, the more it was understood by the Canadian people, the less the Canadian people would like it, the less the Canadian people would want it, the less the Canadian people would support it. That is why the original strategy was to try and slide it through without the Canadian people knowing what it was all about. That is why every step of the way the Government attempted, unfortunately with success, to choke off debate so the Canadian people would not have a full understanding about how damaging, how harmful this trade deal is and would be to them and future generations.

The Government may be able to abuse the opportunity given it through its majority to force this measure through this House but I say it will not be able to play that same game with the Canadian people. The Canadian people are already on to what the Conservative Party is about and we will join with the Canadian people to make sure they have a chance to pronounce themselves in an election. I am confident that when they do so they will reject this deal and they will reject this Government because both the deal and this Government are harmful to Canada and its future.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, when we listened to the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) a few minutes ago, we were treated to an example of why in recent polls we find that politicians are held in about the same esteem among Canadians as convicted sex killers. Politicians continue to plummet in public esteem because of people like the Minister for International Trade.

Mr. McDermid: Oh, shame!