

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Canada is not a delicate and fragile plant needing to be kept in a hothouse, but no country can survive in a globally competitive world without business and government co-operating to invest in people and in their futures.

We are entering into a new era in the international economy. Our country will not prosper in the global market-place simply because it has a captive market. It will prosper because its workers are prepared to accept change, and they will not if the rewards of change are to be enjoyed elsewhere and they are compelled to shoulder alone the burden of sacrifice.

[*Translation*]

Where does the road to our future lie, Mr. Speaker? We must, of course, continue to sell to the United States, but we must also be able to sell our environment protection technology to Japan, penetrate the European market by 1992 and sell our management techniques to the Third World.

In order to achieve these future goals, the public and private sectors will have to co-ordinate their actions. But that co-ordination requires that the Government determine the definition of the term "subsidy", thereby setting the boundaries for co-operation between the state and industry.

Mr. Speaker, this debate is about more than free trade. Indeed, in this House, there are deep philosophical differences that run deeper than the wording of any bill, even deeper than partisanship.

To my left are the NDP, who think that Canada should keep to itself, disregard major world trends and shy away from international involvement.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, still firmly believe in an obsolete free market theory and a timid hands-off approach to the future.

The Liberal Party sees the future in another light.

[*English*]

I simply ask you in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, what would Canada have looked like if, over the last 50 years, we had had a federal Government as crippled by its own lack of will, vision and purpose, and I must say common decency, as this one? I simply ask you, Mr. Speaker, what sort of a country will we have in the future if the industrial governance of Canada is left to 10 aggressive provinces confronting a do-nothing centre with our economic policy being cabled to us from Washington?

We are at an important crossroads. We can either become an economic force with which to be reckoned, with our private sector working in concert with a strong national government, or we will die a slow death as a branch-plant economy with a central government to match. That is what this election was all about. That is why the next election will be fought on the ashes of this agreement. However, the next time, the Canadian people will not buy an illusion and a snare.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to briefly describe the benefits of the proposed Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement and the Canadian business reality.

I think all Hon. Members will realize as well as I do the exceptional growth of the Canadian economy over these last few years, a kind of growth that brought employment to a record level, with job creation that surpassed that of any of the various countries of the European Economic Community, and which in percentage terms has been higher than in any industrialized nation, the 1.3 million new jobs created having led to a rapid decline in the unemployment rate which had become unacceptable. Also over the period Canada experienced a reasonable and above all a stable inflation rate, and in real terms growth surpassed not only that in European countries and the United States but also in Japan, which gave this country the highest real economic growth rate in the world. That is the Canadian economic reality! A reality created by the excellence, expertise and productivity of our human resources and by the abundance of and demand for our natural resources on the international markets.

Mr. Speaker, despite our achievements over these last few years, the Canadian Government cannot afford to become complacent. More and more we are dealing with a strong international market, an international market where there is daily evidence of the impact of rapid technological change on the flow of goods and even services between businesses and individuals of various countries. An international market that is constantly changing, a market that is becoming increasingly global, a market that results in the creation of larger and larger, stronger and stronger trading blocks.

And therein lies one of the basic reasons for the Canadian Government and for Canadians as they did on