

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

I want to quote Clause 153(2) of the Bill. I read this to those Canadians who I know are watching this particular debate—

Mr. Crosbie: No one is watching by now. Everyone has gone for supper.

Mr. Cassidy: It reads:

No order shall be made under subsection (1)—

That is, this free trade Act will not be proclaimed unless:

—the Governor in Council is satisfied that the Government of the United States has taken satisfactory steps to implement the Agreement.

In other words, if this Bill is passed, we in Parliament will be allowing the Government, which has been supine in terms of its acceptance and its tolerance for the American definition, the Cabinet to decide whether or not the Americans have lived up to the agreement. I suggest that that is not good enough.

We have suggested again and again that it is time to have an election on this particular issue. We have suggested that the process being followed right now is inadequate. To have a few weeks of debate in committee over the summer is not adequate. It is not good enough to have a pro-American Cabinet, headed by a pro-American Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), headed by a Minister for International Trade who belongs in a Republican Cabinet in Washington, determining whether or not this agreement should be ratified. That should be up to the people of Canada—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McKinnon): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

● (1900)

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Bourgault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as you know, it takes a great deal of confidence, dynamism, and unrelenting effort for organizations and people in a country such as ours to adapt to changing economic and social conditions. This constant and permanent challenge is what allows us to remain prosperous and competitive.

Because of its diverse economic activity, Canada must remain extremely alert, on the cutting edge of technology, and must adapt to constantly changing foreign markets.

More than ever, we are called upon to outdo ourselves in this global village we all share. In the face of that reality, two reactions are possible: to grumble and cling to the status quo or to take a resolute stand and begin making changes to reflect daily reality.

Mr. Speaker, in the riding of Argenteuil—Papineau, in the beautiful riding I have the honour of representing here, in Ottawa, free trade is welcomed as a sign of leadership, as a sign of the confidence we have in the ability of our businesses, and the vast majority of my constituents support the free trade agreement.

Let me, by way of illustration, name some of the businesses in my riding that are in favour of free trade and that have explained why: The Thundercraft Company of Lachute, Mr. Speaker; here is an example of entrepreneurship, a dynamic company that provides work to 300 persons, 80 per cent of whom are employees of less than 30 years of age.

Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that at the outset, the Thundercraft Company was sceptical, but now, after studying the issue, after carefully examining the agreement we have before us in Parliament today, it wants to jump on the bandwagon of prosperity and it now admits that it is rethinking its marketing strategy and wants to penetrate the very lucrative American pleasure craft market. And, might I add, it says that this agreement has been a motivating factor in its undertaking.

The Lyosan Company, a company that freeze-dries food products, also in Lachute, is not worried at all by free trade. In fact, it already exports 18 per cent of what it produces to the United States. According to the President of Lyosan, the agreement will help him increase his exports. So, Mr. Speaker, this means growth for the company, growth that would not be possible without this agreement.

Les Bois Murray of Grenville makes finished wood products like magnificent wooden staircases. For them, the New England market is a wonderful opportunity and they even expect to triple their sales. They now have 40 employees and logically, tripling their sales should mean two new jobs will be created thanks to this agreement for every one that now exists.

Mobilier Forme-D of Lachute is another company of which we are all proud in our beautiful riding. This company designs top-of-the-line furniture. Last year, it won all the awards: Salon Via Design, Salon du meuble, Salon de l'habitation, Mercuriades, to name only those, and the Argyrose from the *Conseil d'expansion économique d'Argenteuil* at an annual gala for business people. . . . So this company in the so-called soft sector is not at all worried about losing jobs, although the Opposition claims that the furniture industry will suffer. I am giving you an example of a dynamic company led by four young entrepreneurs who are convinced, Mr. Speaker, that they will win with this free trade agreement.

FRE Composite of Saint-André-Est, a high technology company, is completely in agreement with free trade, of course. They are much more concerned, Mr. Speaker, about the changing value of the Canadian dollar compared to the U.S. dollar than about free trade.

Another company in Saint-André, H.B. Fullers-Sesame, now imports filaments from the United States and for it, free trade quite simply means survival. At present, their imports are subject to tariffs and we are now working to have this tariff eliminated because it is detrimental to this company's ability to compete in a highly specialized market. It is therefore very important to this company that the tariffs be eliminated.