

Canada—U.S. Free Trade Agreement

On a personal note, I want to express on the record the fact that my achievements are essentially those of my parents and my wife's parents. They went through the Depression and struggled to provide their children with a better life. In that sense, my father, who served in the Manitoba 44th and was wounded at Vimy, dreamed that some day his family would be a more equal and more obvious participant in Canadian society. It took a long time but many of the restrictions on the basis of race, creed and culture were finally somewhat diminished and I am happy to take my place, in that regard, in this House.

I now want to turn to the free trade debate. I must say I was impressed with the Hon. Member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Axworthy).

Mr. McDermid: You are easily impressed.

Mr. Barrett: My father was born in Winnipeg but it was Winnipeg North, as you will understand.

I was impressed by the logic of his arguments and the persuasiveness of the examples he gave. I was also impressed by the position taken by the Leader of the federal Liberal Party who apparently may not be long for this Chamber. I want to say in all sincerity that he and I have been personal friends for some time. Although we disagree politically, he is one of the finest people I have met in the years I have been involved in public life.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Barrett: The Leader of the Liberal Party was the Minister of Finance during that brief period of time we had power in British Columbia. He was a man of his word. He was a man of principle and conviction, and I am sorry we may be losing him from public life.

I want to comment on the way he was treated during the election campaign. It is important to understand the forces at work in this country supporting the Free Trade Agreement.

The Leader of the Liberal Party took a position, against his own philosophical background, as a vociferous opponent of the Free Trade Agreement. He did it on the basis of logic, reason and principle, and the immediate response was abuse from the establishment media on the editorial pages.

Mr. Tobin: And from Ed Broadbent.

Mr. Barrett: We will come to that in a moment.

Ms. Copps: Please do. I thought it was Ed who was dead.

Mr. Barrett: Even though his own Party was divided and a group were meeting behind his back to cut him to pieces, he still stood his ground and as a matter of principle fought through to the point in the campaign where his own Party recognized his position.

He was vilified in the editorial pages of newspapers in every part of this country. He was vilified in the backrooms by his own Liberal colleagues in every part of this country.

Mr. Rodriguez: Including Sheila.

Mr. Barrett: I want to deal with that because it is important to understand exactly where the Official Opposition stands. They stand right on the fence. We have seen the Liberal Party play both sides against the middle for their own purposes time after time after time. They are now going to lose the best spokesperson they have against the free trade deal as he goes down into history.

Why is that happening? Because the Liberals understand, as stated by Michel Robert, President of the Liberal Party of Canada, who said, "Unless we change our position on free trade we will never win another seat in Quebec". It will be interesting to watch as the debate goes on—

Ms. Copps: Ed is dead.

Mr. Barrett: —and those with a philosophy, attachment and commitment to opposing the free trade agreement will stand up—

Ms. Copps: Ed is dead. Ed is dead.

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, is there a screeching crow in here?

Mr. Rodriguez: No, it is just Sheila.

Mr. Barrett: Oh, well, we will watch how the Liberal Party divides on this issue and find out who really calls the tune as the Party is split right down the middle on supporting or opposing the Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. Nystrom: Shrieking Sheila.

Ms. Copps: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The news of my Leader's demise is greatly exaggerated. I am very disappointed that the NDP, instead of dealing with the trade issue, is doing the same thing it did in the election, cutting up the Liberal Party. No class at all.