

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

● (0030)

Mr. Crawford: Factors in the southern states such as lower labour costs, fewer unions and lower employee benefits, have contributed to an exodus of manufacturers from the northern states, all with the highest minimum wages in the U.S. Employment in the manufacturing sectors of Michigan, New York and Ohio dropped by an average of 13 per cent. This same north-south trend will apply to the Canadian manufacturing sector in the aftermath of this trade deal.

Almost 60 per cent of low-income workers are women. Minimum wages are especially important to part-time workers, 75 per cent of whom are women. Thus the threat posed to Canadian minimum wage standards is greatest for women, as well as for the disabled and cultural minorities. Some two million U.S. manufacturing jobs have disappeared since 1979, and it is expected that 90 per cent of the new jobs created in that country between now and 1995 will be in the lower paying personal service sector. This trend is also occurring in Canada.

Given that minimum wage workers in Canada currently find themselves on the low end of the ladder already, they can ill afford further pay cuts to the low levels experienced in the U.S. However, companies will be pressured to harmonize, equalize, and jeopardize the blue collar worker.

The very grave concerns the people of Kent have for this trade deal were demonstrated in my election. The working class, blue collar workers, know they will be hardest hit by this trade deal. They voted for a Party that looks to Canada's future and does not plan just for the next fiscal quarter. They want to see action to train and retrain displaced workers.

The Government says it has the programs in place to look after those who will be negatively affected by this deal. What have the Tories done with industrial training programs? Cut them by 45 per cent. The Government capped support for apprenticeship programs at \$37 million this year, a cut of \$400,000 from last year. That is the Tory commitment to apprenticeship.

The Government should be following the lead of the Ontario Government, a real leader in skills training. In 1984 the federal Government spent \$2.2 billion on skills training. In 1988 it was cut 27 per cent to \$1.6 billion. That does not show me that the Government has a real commitment to training and retraining our workers and young people. In the meantime, the Ontario Government added 98 per cent new funds to its programs.

I could go on and on about the effects of this deal on culture, energy, foreign investment policy, the service sector, financial services, women, medicare, unemployment insurance, pensions, child care services, education and Crown corporations, but I will not because I know my colleagues on this side have covered those points very thoroughly.

To conclude, I want to say what a pleasure it was to take part in this historic debate. The future will show who was on the right side of this debate. I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to stand at 12:30 this morning and speak on Clause 2 of the free trade legislation. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the residents of Longueuil who voted for me and gave me a strong majority last November 21. Residents of Longueuil gave me 53 per cent of the votes. Believe me, I made at least 75 speeches on free trade during the election campaign. It is mainly for that reason that people from Longueuil voted for me. In my riding of Longueuil there are many small and middle-sized businesses, as well as some large ones, namely Pratt & Whitney. Ninety-nine per cent of these businesses, supported the Progressive Conservative Party because they firmly believe in free trade and in Canada's future under free trade.

Mr. Chairman, the Liberal Party has always claimed to be a very democratic party. They said that it was up to the people to decide but, in 1984, we formed the government with 211 Members. We had the power and we had the mandate to act. But they said that we had to be more democratic than that. The people should be consulted on free trade. Do you know what they did? They used the non-elected Senate to block the free trade legislation. That's antidemocratic. We went to the people because we wanted to be democratic. We consulted the people. Is the Liberal Party still willing to block the free trade legislation with its non-elected majority Senate? If that is what we call democracy, I think that we are off the mark and that Canadians absolutely don't understand what Parliament is.

Canada's geography, Mr. Chairman, is such that it is spread out lengthwise. Canada is a huge country stretching five thousand kilometers from East to West. And the population, of course, is concentrated in the South because people prefer living in the South rather