

Adjournment Debate

I also want to thank the hon. member for his continued and persistent questioning on these things on behalf of his constituents and other constituents who are in like circumstances from the province of Newfoundland.

[*Translation*]

CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Madam Speaker, I am glad to rise tonight to follow up on a question I put recently to the minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs regarding cross-border shopping.

Cross-border shopping is increasing constantly and is becoming a real problem. The question I am asking, and that we have the right to ask ourselves as Canadians, is: Have we seen enough stores closing and employees losing their jobs to do something to correct the situation?

Daniel Forgues, in an article in *La Tribune de Sherbrooke*, says and I quote:

The number of travellers entering the country and declaring goods purchased in the United States has increased tremendously at all border-crossing points in Eastern Townships during the last 10 months, that is from April 1, 1991 to January 31, 1992. The increase is 151.3 per cent for the custom offices of the Stanhope area and 103.1 per cent for those of the Rock Island area.

People from Quebec alone have spent hundreds of millions of dollars creating jobs and wealth south of the border while slowing down our economic recovery; Montrealers, for example, patronize in large numbers American stores. One Montrealer out of five has spent \$640 in the United States this fall. The store owners in Windsor, Ontario, also suffer a lot from this. But what shall we do to curb this financial drain? Are we proud enough to take a stand?

Recently, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Revenue have announced measures in response to concerns about the impact of cross-border shopping and of the smuggling of tobacco products in many Canadian communities. This announcement contained five major points, including the elimination of tariffs on consumer goods not produced in Canada and the levy at the border of provincial taxes on alcohol and tobacco, on imports shipped by mail or courier into Canada as well as on smuggled tobacco products. This government initiative is most commendable. More needs to be done, however. We must change Canadians'

perception, their attitude. We have to foster a sense of belonging such that Canadians will buy products made in Canada over anything else.

Canada had put forward such a strategy a dozen of years ago, but only as a promotional feature similar to a campaign to promote tourism. Never has such a program been entrenched in a piece of legislation like the "buy American" policy has in the United States. The Americans have that sense of belonging and the feeling of pride that goes with it. It is obvious, judging from all the signs on their cars and the slogans on their bumper stickers. We are facing structural problems. That much is true. Store owners remind us regularly that taxes of all kinds are preventing them from lowering their prices to match those of their competitors in the United States. Americans enjoy important comparative advantages such as cheaper manpower, economies of scale, more flexible hours, and lower fixed cost.

Can our government do anything to make our products more attractive? A lower dollar, lower taxes, changes in social costs. If our citizens shared a feeling of belonging to their country as strong as that of the Americans, we would have made progress. The lack of such a feeling, the lack of solidarity among Canadians have caused us economic as well as political problems. The constitutional issue could have been settled by now if we had developed some feelings of belonging to Canada.

So, I want to know if the minister intends to implement a strategy for a promotion campaign or to encourage us to develop a feeling of pride and belonging so that Canadians buy domestic products. Will there be a similar promotion campaign of high quality for our domestic products? For example, will our groceries which represent—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but I must interrupt the hon. member. I think he was able to put his question, and his time has expired. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Drummond for his pertinent question and one that affects my riding as well, being along the border.