

Supply

programs have been jeopardized. In a way, it is the wringer process: once the tip of the hand is caught in it, the shoulder is often pulled in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time for questions and comments has expired. Debate. The Hon. Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State responsible for Science and Technology (Mr. de Cotret) has the floor.

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State (Science and Technology)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes to follow up on my Hon. colleague's comments.

Mr. Speaker, the free-trade agreement is the outcome of a collective effort which pooled the energies of ten, hundreds, and thousands of Canadian men and women who were determined to see the fulfilment of the promises made by the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), which promises are endorsed by all Cabinet members and all members of his Party.

Since we came to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, we have been addressing a long term job based on the implementation of two basic goals, national reconciliation and economic renewal.

And now, Mr. Speaker, we have something tangible because the Government's direction is based on concrete achievements that are bound to bring a fundamental change in the whole political and economic history of Canada.

As far as national reconciliation is concerned, the previous Government proved to be unable to come up with even the shadow of a proposal that would be satisfactory to all partners. It took this Government's own tenacity and flexibility to arrive at a new constitutional accord finally being signed, whereby the pointless confrontation of the last decades gave way to a climate conducive to dialogue and open co-operation between the central Government and the provinces.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, the Meech Lake Accord is something solid, something real that is taking us light years away from the noisy rhetoric and far fetched policies of the Liberals, whose arrogance and carelessness led the country to the brink of breaking up.

Turning to economic renewal, that cannot be separated from the free-trade agreement. To us, freer trade is the key to Canada's continued economic, social and cultural development. The free-trade agreement will in no way hinder the economic reforms this Government is in the process of implementing. To the contrary, this progressive opening-up of the American market will increase our ability to carry on our regional development policies.

Mr. Speaker, the agreement does not force upon the Government new restrictions as to the grants it is extending to whatever type of industry.

I would like to dispel any doubts in this regard. It is very clear and obvious. We will continue to develop programs that

really take regional characteristics into consideration but, from now on, we will have at our disposal more powerful tools to support the development of traditionally disadvantaged regions.

• (1710)

There will be no change either, Mr. Speaker, in the operations of subsidized businesses exporting to the United States. The free trade Agreement does not protect those businesses from countervail measures that the United States might take against them. But both countries can now rely on the action of an organization, a dispute settlement committee, precisely when anti-dumping duties and countervail duties are imposed. If a dispute occurs and the committee concludes that the laws have been incorrectly or unfairly applied, that new organization will be able to correct the situation because its decisions will be binding. This is a protection mechanism which Canada did not enjoy until now and which will put our country on an equal footing with the United States.

Mr. Speaker, the Government will continue to take action to promote regional development, in particular in the areas of resource management, research, scientific development and policies regarding transportation, education, training, small business development and energy.

The new decentralization approach will not be questioned by the free trade Agreement. Some support or subsidy programs will obviously have to be amended within the next five years. Those adjustments would have been required anyway because of our desire to increase the efficiency of our regional development programs. An economic agreement with the Americans does not change anything in that respect. With the free trade Agreement, we are given a legal framework that will be much less arbitrary if countervailing actions were requested by the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I have summarized the expected impact of the Canada-United States trade Agreement on regional development. Why should we worry and moan when the free trade Agreement increases our opportunities to interact and negotiate with the United States?

My colleagues from the opposition do not sufficiently trust their conciliation capacities. But the old fears the Liberals and the New Democrats seem to be entertaining are not really important. The main thing is that we have been elected with the strongest majority in Canadian history and that, as such, it will rest with us to ensure that our trade agreement with the Americans will open a new era of prosperity for all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I find this very comforting. I think that, by rejecting the free trade Agreement, the opposition shows its total ignorance of history, its disregard for the lessons of the past and for the economic environment. The opponents of the free trade Agreement do they not realize that, outside of our borders, there is a global economy based on technology, on the free circulation of information and capital, a world which, until now, was excluding Canada from the three major trade