

have their say. I can mention by way of example my own community of Windsor, the fourth or fifth largest industrial centre in Canada. Windsor should be a place that the committee comes to hold a hearing on the subject of the Government's trade deal with the United States.

There is a second reason that I think argues very strongly as to why the Conservative majority on the External Affairs committee was wrong to ram through a motion limiting the hearings of the committee to the provincial and territorial capitals and also rejecting the request of the Liberals and the New Democrats not to cut off the hearings early in December. The Congress of the United States will have until April 2 to hold hearings on this trade deal, to study in committee this trade deal and, in fact, to be shown the very drafts of the exact wording of the final version of the Government's trade deal with the United States.

The Government has given no convincing explanation as to why the elected representatives of the people of Canada should have less opportunity to study this trade deal than the elected representatives of the people of the United States. Why is this Government refusing at the very least to let the External Affairs committee continue its hearings into the trade deal with the United States at least as long as the period available to the members of Congress of the United States? If this deal is as good as the Government says it is, what has it to fear? Surely, if it is a good deal for Canada, the more it is discussed through open parliamentary hearings the more it would become acceptable to Canadians.

We in the Liberal Party looking at the information that the Government has provided have concluded that this deal is a bad deal for Canada. It undermines our economy. It undermines our sovereignty. It is the very sell-out of everything that has been built up and about which we are proud in this country. I suspect that that is the reason the Government is trying to rush through these committee hearings. It does not want Canadians to get a full understanding of what this deal is all about by having committee hearings go on at least as long as the committee hearings in the U.S. Congress, hearings which would be based on the full text, the only thing that would have legal effect on the deal the Government has entered into with the United States on trade.

The Government, using its majority in the committee, has rammed through a motion limiting the hearings to the provincial and territorial capitals and insisting that they be completed by early December. I know that if there were a recorded vote here the same majority would come in to bring about the same unfortunate result with respect to the adoption of the motion before us.

I want to put on the record our opposition to the kind of travel, the limited travel, that the Conservative Government wants to allow the committee to be able to carry out to take evidence from Canadians across the country. We want to make clear our opposition to the way the Conservative majority, the Conservative Government, wants to limit the hearings of this

Motions

committee overall to early December and not to allow the elected representatives of the Canadian people to have at least the same length of time to study this matter as the elected representatives of the American people.

Therefore, I want to put this opposition clearly on record. I want to say that when the Speaker puts the question Members opposite will hear us say, "On division", which is a clear parliamentary indication of our opposition to the way this Government is trying to choke off opportunities for Canadians to be heard in parliamentary hearings and the way this Government wants to prevent this committee from at least having the same opportunities as committees in the Congress of the United States.

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government I want to reply to some of the statements that were made this afternoon and to explain what the standing committee will be doing in its hearings. I want to make it very clear from the outset that the Government is not trying in any way, shape or form to stifle debate in this country and do something quickly so that in fact Canadians do not have the facts. We are so confident in the positive aspects of this agreement that we want Canadians to understand it. When they do understand what this agreement does for Canada they will realize how good it will be for them.

So we are not trying to cover up or rush things through at all. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, let me just very briefly go through the chronology of what has been going on. In March, 1982, the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs issued the third volume of its report entitled, "Canada's trade relations with the United States". It had studied this issue since 1980. Its major recommendation was that Canada seek bilateral free trade with the U.S. in all sectors. The committee heard over 100 witnesses.

In November, 1982, the Hon. Donald Macdonald headed a royal commission on Canada's economy. He had a total of 1,513 representations: 496 individuals, 373 private sector interventions, 231 voluntary sector representations, and I could go on through the whole list of them. There were 40 local and regional government representations and 72 volumes of research studies. What was their bottom line? That Canada should undertake free trade negotiations with the United States.

Then what happened? I can tell Hon. Members that a committee from the Government of Canada went across the country and held hearings. Its recommendation was to carry on these negotiations with our largest trading partner, something which has taken place.

Now, the deal has been signed. The agreement has been signed and tabled in the House of Commons. The standing committee is working extremely hard right now. It is putting in longer hours, I would say, than most standing committees have put in. For Members opposite to say that there are just big