

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

I think that this is a monumental and historic occasion. In three or four hours from now we will have an opportunity to put closure on this motion and bring on the new prosperity, the new hope, the new vision for the young of Canada who in fact are going to carry all of us into a very pleasant retirement. By that time Canada will clearly have taken its place as the leading country in the 21st century in the world.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Madam Speaker, across the country tonight there are many, many constituents of ours who are saying: "Forgive them for they know not what they do". They are saying that because they are knowledgeable, intelligent people who have made the effort to find out what this free trade deal is all about. They are a group of men and women who wonder why we cannot recognize that economic union with the United States to which we are committing ourselves is a change in the basic philosophy of Canada, a basic change in what Canada is all about.

This agreement alters the basic tenet of what makes Canada different from the United States. The United States believes in the supremacy of the market. The economy of the United States is basically driven by the market. Over the years in Canada we have decided that certain things which are provided by the market in the U.S. should be available to all Canadians, available even if they do not have the ability to get them in some other way. They should be provided not by the market but by the country regardless of the ability to pay or to get it from the market.

I am sure that everyone here tonight can think of an example of how Canada is different from the United States. We have chosen the Canadian way of providing service to all, not just to those who can pay for it. In this regard medicare is probably the best example. We believe that the best possible care that we as a nation can provide should be available to all. In the U.S. the best care is available only to those who can pay for it. Some 36 million Americans have no medicare insurance. Therefore only minimal care is provided for them and even then it is considered welfare. If one cannot pay for it then one cannot have it unless someone is there to give it to you.

Unemployment insurance is another good example in this regard. We make it available in quantities much greater than the contributions that were made by people to the plan.

Our public pension plans are another example, as is family allowance. These are familiar programs that we

have in place which are not in place in the United States of America. These programs are directly funded and are available to Canadians outside the market-place. It is not surprising that these are also the programs or the types of programs to which the Americans refer to as subsidies when they impose a countervail on our products. They do not understand our philosophy that everyone should have a part of the good life and that it should not only be available to the privileged few. Their philosophy is you get only what you can afford and if you cannot afford it then that is too bad.

This so-called trade deal will require the harmonization of our economies. What will that do to these programs? Does it mean that they must be harmonized as well? Nobody has said "Yes" to that question. And no one has said "No". If the Americans think they are subsidies, as they have indicated on a number of occasions, then they will demand that our levels in these programs be lowered or theirs will have to be raised. I ask Hon. Members to figure out which one will happen.

One of the main issues with respect to this deal is whether or not it threatens our sovereignty. Again, nobody can come up with a convincing "No". The Government has pointed often to the European Economic Community saying that the countries there have not lost their sovereignty. This is different. We are quite different. Why are we different? First, there are only two countries in this agreement. One of those countries, the U.S.A., is 10 times larger than Canada. Trade with the U.S. already takes up 75 per cent to 80 per cent of Canada's exports. Much of Canada's industry is foreign-owned. These are differences between us and the economic community in Europe.

Canada and the U.S. share a common language. Our nearest neighbour aside from the United States is 1,500 miles away, not just across the border to the East or to the West.

Canada's history has been one of resistance to absorption by the United States. Strong measures have been necessary in the past to stop that absorption. In 1812 the Americans attempted absorption by invasion. We fought them off. In 1867 Confederation was a response to American expansion after the Civil War.

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The expansion was to the west and the north under the American slogan "54-40 or Bust", which would have taken in most of the western Prairies and British Columbia. Confederation was in response to that American expansionism, and it worked.