

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

If there is a market somewhere in the world for duck feet, Canadians should be going after that market. In that way, we will not end up with all of our eggs in one basket.

After the devastation of the Second World War, Japan had nothing. I understand now that it spends about 2 per cent of its Gross National Product on research and development. We spend something like .7 of 1 per cent. Looking at Japan and Canada, one can immediately see the reflection between the amount of money invested in R and D and the benefits reaped therefrom.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to appoint a full-time Minister of Agriculture with dispatch, for three reasons: to reassure the people of Canada that agriculture is important; to allay any ideas that Americans may have that they are going to corner our domestic market; and finally, to generate confidence within the farming community, permitting them to move ahead and expand their operations.

I see the Chair signalling that my time is up. I thank the Chair and the House for its indulgence in allowing me to complete my remarks.

• (1340)

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should extend my congratulations to the new Member for Leeds-Grenville (Mr. Jordan) on his first speech in the House of Commons. This is not my first speech in this House, but it is my first speech in this House as the Member representing Winnipeg—Transcona.

As Members will recall, some with regret I am sure, at least on the other side of the House, I have been a Member of this House for the last nine and a half years. At that time I represented a riding called Winnipeg—Birds Hill. I am very happy, with all respect to the Town of Birds Hill and the name Birds Hill, to be the Member for Winnipeg—Transcona, because Transcona happens to be the name of my home town. It comprises a good third of the riding of Winnipeg—Transcona and I am particularly pleased that the name has now been incorporated into the name of the riding I represent.

I would like to take the name of Transcona as a departure point for my remarks on the Free Trade Agreement. The name comes from two sources, the word "transcontinental" and the name of Lord Strathcona who was responsible, as many of you will recall, for

the first transcontinental railway. The Town of Transcona was created in 1911 as a place for the railway shops involved in the building of a second transcontinental railway, at that time the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern, I believe. So it is in that context that I begin by saying that for me the passage of the Free Trade Agreement puts my faith, if you like, in my self-understanding as a Canadian in triple jeopardy.

Of the three things most important to me, the first is, of course, the background from which I come, that of a railway family from Transcona, concerned with railway matters and with the future of a community which, understandably, is now not only a rail community but also a bedroom community for part of the greater City of Winnipeg.

The second is my self-understanding as a United Church person and a minister in that church. I will also have something to say about what the Minister of State for Housing (Mr. McDermid) said about the United Church earlier. The third is my self understanding as a New Democrat. I would like to deal with all three of those things and say why, for me, this election campaign, the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and the vote tonight are a source of, to put it bluntly, depression for me.

I feel many of the things I have valued most about the country that I live in and was brought up in are being put at risk tonight, finally and firmly, by the vote on the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. I had occasion to raise in the House earlier today under Standing Order 31 a concern I have about what has happened to the railways, particularly the CNR, and what is predicted to happen even more so in the next few years. I talked about the document which came into my possession during the election which dealt with a down-sizing of the CNR to some 26,000 employees.

When I was born in 1951 the railway had 151,000 employees. The aim of the Government and of Mr. Lawless, President of CN Rail is, within a very few more years, to bring the level of employees at CN down to 26,000. That is of concern to me coming from Transcona and having a great many supporters in the CN shops, the one remaining whole back shop for the CN, because in order to do that it becomes obvious that the railway is planning to contract out work which should be done in the Transcona shops I just completely fail to see why the railway would want to put itself in a position where it had no back shop capacity of its own to do its work. Yet we read that the CNR is contemplating the purchase of new locomotives from General Electric