

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

negligible gain is not worth the larger price paid, namely the sellout of our country.

During the election campaign and indeed in the House since, Members on the opposite side have scoffed at the suggestion that our social programs are in jeopardy. Yet, if they are so sure that our neighbours to the south do not wish to tamper with these programs, why will they not commit this to writing in the agreement?

Yes, we have heard the argument from the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) that universal social programs are protected under GATT. However, pressure from big business will be felt by this Government. There will be no need for the U.S. Government to force an end to our social programs. Big business has already proven itself capable of forcing the Prime Minister's hand.

My riding contains a large number of senior citizens. These are the people who worked to make Canada what it is today. They are entitled to a reward for that hard work and legacy. They are entitled to a secure knowledge that our social programs are not in jeopardy.

We have heard Hon. Members opposite orally guarantee that seniors are not in jeopardy, but talk is cheap and broken promises are the motto of this Government and its predecessor. What seniors in my riding and indeed all Canadians want is a guarantee in writing placed in the agreement, a few words to ensure peace of mind, but the Government will not listen.

My Party has proposed that the following be added to the Bill in order to complete the initiative of the Government. Let the Bill clearly and succinctly state "that for greater certainty, nothing in this Act or in the agreement shall be interpreted so as to affect the continuation of existing or the establishment of new Canadian social programs, including the health care system, unemployment insurance, child care, pensions, minimum wage law, labour law and maternity benefits". By adding this important amendment to the Bill, social programs are thus removed from the bargaining table and the Canadian social safety net remains intact.

Why will the Government not listen? Its philosophy is, "Our way and you pay". The attitude appears to be that any agreement is better than no agreement at all. I say to the Prime Minister and his Government, amend this deal to reflect the initial goal desired, or, since we have already cast aside all the amendments that were suggested, at least introduce legislation to protect those

Canadians who will suffer as a result. We have already seen Canadian companies announce over 1,800 lay-offs because of this poorly negotiated deal and yet it is not even in force. What will happen in the future?

This is far more than a commercial document, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has called it in debates. Indeed, this is more than just a trade deal. It is a resource sellout.

The Government has guaranteed that the U.S. will have access to Canadian oil and gas, even in times of Canadian shortage. That cannot be disputed because it is there. Canadians should have the first claim and the full control over the use and disposition of our own resources.

Mr. Mayer: They do.

Mr. Wappel: It is in the agreement. The Prime Minister has bargained this away.

In closing, I would like to thank the Ministers of the Crown for their spelling lessons of last week. On Wednesday last, the Minister for International Trade stated that he would like speedy passage of this Bill, s-p-e-e-d-y. On Thursday last, he told us of consistent decisions, c-o-n-s-i-s-t-e-n-t. During our marathon session of last Friday, the deputy Government House Leader told us that the Prime Minister was going to discuss an interim report, d-i-s-c-u-s-s. Today, I would like to return the favour by telling the Ministers and this House what the people of Scarborough West say to this trade agreement, and that is no, n-o.

Mr. Micheal O'Brien (York North): Madam Speaker, I would like to preface my remarks by saying from the outset that unlike my friend opposite, I am far more optimistic about the future of Canada. I find the statement of the Hon. Member opposite about saying no to the Free Trade Agreement somewhat ludicrous given the current circumstances as I stand here on the day before Christmas Eve and a few hours before passing this agreement.

Getting back to optimism, I would like to relate to the House and to all Canadians some facts about my riding of York North. It is a pleasure and an honour to speak to this House and the people of Canada on this historic occasion. My riding of York North, where I have lived for the last 32 years, is Canada's most populous electoral district, consisting of four large townships and a population of nearly 180,000 persons who live in a unique blend of urban and rural regions.