

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

Second, if the FTA does not proceed, will not Canadians, including Ontarians, be exposed to the undiluted effect of all the provisions of the omnibus trade Bill which was signed by the President last week?

**Miss Nicholson (Trinity):** Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to speculate about what Congress might do given certain events. However, I think that to enter into a trade agreement because we are afraid of retaliation is surely the worst possible motivation. I have great faith that Canadians can negotiate a better agreement than this one, and that we can indeed compete internationally and do not have to lock ourselves into a bad agreement out of fear.

**Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson) is leaving because I want to address the first couple of minutes of my remarks to her. I have always had a great admiration for the Hon. Member. She has been and still is a hard-working Member of Parliament. She has just fought a nomination battle and won a close race against Paul Hellyer. I believe that she receives respect from all sides in this House.

However, she has just totally misled this House with the statement that she made on this agreement. I feel badly although I think she did it because she did not know. This is the text of the free trade agreement. This is what was printed and is made available to all Members of each Party, regardless of their political stripe. It is available to the public at no charge. Well, that is a little misleading because tax dollars paid for the printing of it and the public pays taxes. However, it is available. This is not an explanatory note; it is the agreement and it is available.

● (1950)

When I pointed that out to her, she denied it. Hundreds of people have come into my constituency office, as has been the case with my colleagues, to pick up a copy of this agreement. They have read it.

I understand that there is genuine disagreement about the free trade agreement and that there are different opinions. For the last three months we have listened to the debate in the House over the implementation of Bill C-130, the free trade agreement. While I might expect it from some Hon. Members in the House, I was very disappointed in that Hon. Member. I hope it is not an example of the desperation that the Liberals are showing, and the kind of action they will stoop to in the election campaign which is coming very soon.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade, I have had a very rewarding experience over the last couple of years. While I was not on the front line and actively involved in the negotiations, I have been on the periphery. I worked with the President of the Treasury Board, the Hon. Member for Vancouver Centre (Miss Carney), then Minister

for International Trade and now with my colleague, the Minister for International Trade, the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie). I want to thank both of them for giving me the opportunity to play, albeit a small role, a role in the free trade negotiations, that of piloting the legislation through the House of Commons. It has been a great experience for me and one that I will never forget.

Of course, I must thank the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) as well for giving me this opportunity by appointing me Parliamentary Secretary.

I want to congratulate Ambassador Ritchie and Ambassador Reisman, two gentlemen for whom I have the greatest respect. They are very proud Canadians and have done a marvellous job in negotiating the free trade agreement. To the staff at the trade negotiation office as well, I want to thank them for all their kindness. They have been most helpful. They have educated, guided and done a wonderful job, as have those in International Trade and External Affairs. At the outset, I wanted to pass on my thanks to those people.

I have given about 85 speeches across Canada and in the United States on the free trade agreement. Many in this Chamber as well as many throughout Canada will know that once you turn McDermid loose on free trade, heaven knows how long it will take. I will try to limit myself to a few subjects and perhaps comment on what the Leaders of the two opposition Parties mentioned today.

First, I will deal with the sovereignty issue. One hears time and again that Canada will no longer be a sovereign country because all the decisions will be made in the United States. Since other Members have gone back to quote Conservatives, let me refer to Mackenzie King. Mackenzie King would not sign an agreement with the United States to establish the St. Lawrence Seaway because he believed that it would diminish Canada's sovereignty. That is an historical fact.

It took a later Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent, to realize that the St. Lawrence Seaway would be a great benefit to Canada. He signed the agreement that Mackenzie King refused to sign in the belief that it would diminish Canada's sovereignty.

Has the St. Lawrence Seaway diminished Canada's sovereignty? Not at all.

Today we are hearing from the Liberals that this free trade agreement will demolish Canada's sovereignty. There is no truth in fact. There is no example they can give to suggest that our sovereignty will be reduced in any way, shape, or form.

If the Liberals are saying that we have certain obligations when we sign an agreement, that we must do certain things and will face consequences if we do not, it is true that we have made that commitment. But we also made that commitment when we joined GATT in 1949. We made commitments to do certain things and to pay the penalty if we did not.