

Senator Murray: I must look up your vote.

An Hon. Senator: We will expect your vote.

Senator Thériault: You said that the "distinct society" clause did not mean certain things. Now you are saying that if the Meech Lake Accord were in force and all the provinces signed it then Quebec would not need the "notwithstanding" clause, because this would be taken care of by the "distinct society" clause. That is what you are saying; that is what many others have been saying; that is what Bourassa is saying.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I would thank my honourable friend to read the replies that I have carefully given to the questions that have been put on that issue today. If he does so, he will see that his own interpretation is quite at variance with what I have said.

[Translation]

CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

DISADVANTAGES TO CANADIANS OF AVAILABILITY OF AMERICAN USED CARS

Hon. Azellus Denis: Honourable senators, may I ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate a question? In the tons of advertising for which the government paid millions, probably a record amount, there is no mention of the possible disadvantages of the Free Trade Agreement. On the contrary, everything is in favour of the Free Trade Agreement.

I read in the generalities, which are only hypotheses or suppositions, that the agreement will gradually eliminate the embargo on used cars and thus give Canadians greater choice. I would like to know this from the Leader of the Government: What are the advantages of a wider choice of used cars for Canadians?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government, Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations and Acting Minister of Communications): Honourable senators, my friend and colleague will have the opportunity to discuss this question and others during the debate that will begin in a few minutes.

The Senate Foreign Affairs Committee will also hold hearings where the Minister and officials will be present to answer my friend's questions.

Senator Denis: That is exactly why I asked you the question—so that they could be prepared for it.

I would like to know how access to American used cars can be advantageous. I heard that American used cars are much cheaper than Canadian ones.

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay: It's rust!

Senator Denis: Therefore, our used cars lose value compared to American cars as a result of the Free Trade Agreement.

For example, once the agreement is in force, when I want to trade in my car for a new one, I may get \$200 or \$300 or \$400 less for it as a result of the Free Trade Agreement. I want to know if that is an advantage. Besides that, we will have trouble

[Senator Thériault.]

finding out who owned the American used cars and whether the odometer was changed and making sure that the used car a Canadian buys is not completely used up or worn out.

I do not see in this ton of advertising what could be to our benefit in the Free Trade Agreement. Would it be that Canadians will have a bigger choice of old cars, when this wider selection will result in each and every car owner in Canada losing \$300 or \$400 or more? For more expensive models, it could be up to \$800 or \$900 or more.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): The debate is on!

Hon. Jean-Maurice Simard: I am sure that Minister Crosbie will give you an answer in French!

[English]

CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government, Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations and Acting Minister of Communications) moved the second reading of Bill C-2, to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States of America.

He said: Honourable senators, on September 7 last I opened debate on second reading of Bill C-130, to implement the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement. On September 15 that bill received second reading and went to the Foreign Affairs Committee. On October 1 the bill died when the Thirty-third Parliament was dissolved and the general election was called for November 21.

Bill C-2, which is now before the Senate for second reading, is essentially the same bill that was before us at dissolution. The government has returned, fortified by a mandate from the electorate, to proceed with the Free Trade Agreement and to proceed with this bill. That, as we have been told in the Speech from the Throne on December 12, is the primary purpose of this early session of the Thirty-fourth Parliament.

Honourable senators, this chapter in the free trade debate is coming to an end. It has been a very long one and I will try not to prolong it unduly.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, for the record, the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs recommended to Canadians free trade with the United States first in 1978, and again in 1982, just as did the Macdonald Inquiry in 1985. In all these instances, the recommendations came after a very comprehensive study.

In keeping with these recommendations, the government, which saw the opportunity to obtain for Canada some major economic benefits, started negotiating free trade with the United States in June 1986, and in October 1987 reached an agreement which was officially signed in January 1988.

Never before in the history of Canada were the private sector and the provincial governments so scrupulously consulted during international trade negotiations.