

down some of my thoughts, my own personal reflections on what the free trade deal in which we were dealing with our neighbors meant to me. I sensed that the Free Trade Agreement was taking a bold step which was taking our nation into the 21st century. Most important, we were taking this step as a mature country confident of ourselves and with our sights on a stronger, more prosperous country for the future.

The benefits of freer trade will make Canada stronger. We can be more Canadian, more independent and more sovereign. The more our nation produces, the more we earn. The more we earn the more we can afford for Canadian arts and culture, education and research, social and medical services, programs to resolve our regional economic disparities. All Canadians will benefit from a freer trade agreement because Canada will be made stronger through this agreement.

I would like to say something about the opponents of this deal who spent a great deal of time over the last six months running around the country presenting their senseless arguments and saying that the Government had sold the country to the Americans. As a word of caution I say to you, Mr. Speaker, because you have made your statements loudly and often, that it does not make them any more valid going around in the manner they did.

Senator George Van Roggen, Emmett Hall, the Canadian Federation of Labour, and Mr. Hamel from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce have all told you, Sir, that these statements and arguments against this Free Trade Agreement are pure falsehoods. These statements we have heard against the deal are nothing more than the Opposition's idea of political power play, to blur out the facts and confuse the public.

One such falsehood that presented itself during this last election, one that everyone in northern Ontario is concerned about, is the effect that this agreement will have on regional development policies in northern Ontario. The Opposition stated that our regional development programs, like Community Futures and FEDNOR, have been destroyed or disbanded. This is pure nonsense.

Let me present the facts. The Free Trade Agreement will not affect government subsidies to business or regional development programs. Canada's right to provide assistance for job creation and economic expansion in less developed regions of the country remains unaffected. Articles 8 and 11 of the Subsidies

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Code of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade read:

Subsidies are used by governments to promote important objectives of social and economic policy . . . among such objectives are the elimination of industrial, economic and social disadvantages of specific regions.

Those who have been saying that regional economic expansion or development are not there are wrong. As we all know, the Free Trade Agreement was negotiated under the terms of the GATT. It incorporates certain provisions of the GATT, and includes the GATT subsidies code. This means that Governments in Canada continue to provide for economic growth and development. What was discussed in terms of regional development during the free trade negotiations was a refinement of these existing rules under GATT. There is a clear agreement that assistance can be provided for regional development, as long as it does not distort the trade agreement.

The fact is that federal and state Governments of the United States make liberal use of regional economic development programs. Canada's Government can continue to do so as well. Government agencies such as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Western Diversification Office and FEDNOR in northern Ontario will continue to be free to offer creative economic development and industrial assistance packages.

They will be able to pin-point areas in which Canadians have the competitive edge, and assist in developing export markets. This spells good news for the growth of regions, our region in northern Ontario—goods news for northern Ontario.

Since 1935 Canada has pursued a course of eliminating tariffs between our two countries. This current agreement deals effectively with the remaining 20 per cent of the trade that still suffers from these trade barriers. Although this agreement may not be perfect, it is a step in the right direction for it provides Canadians the opportunity to build on, extend and improve in our trade with our largest trading partner.

As someone who comes from northern Ontario, I see this agreement as a good one. In our region where more than seven out of ten jobs depend directly on trade, the Free Trade Agreement secures access to our largest and wealthiest market. More important, it ensures our region's future growth and stability. No longer will we have to transport raw resources from our area. We will now be able to process right here in northern Ontario and not worry about the tariffs and the trading barriers which have for so long limited our growth.