

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** I was invited by the Minister to talk about the election campaign, and I will yield to that temptation for a moment. The main theme of the election and the main theme of this session is the trade Bill. The election revolved around the arguments pro and con, and through the efforts of this Party in forcing an election on this issue, we managed to focus the attention of Canadians on the most important issue of our lifetime.

Yes, it is true, we did not win a majority of the seats. However, I believe that we won the hearts and minds of Canadians on this issue. We won on the merits of the case against the deal. We discussed the deal in detail, as I have attempted to do, basing myself on the document. We discussed the details of the deal and how it would affect Canada.

Members of the Conservative Party attempted to obscure the details, and one cannot blame them because the Minister in charge had not even read the deal. What happened is that we won that debate for the minds and hearts of Canadians. We were winning the election, and then two things happened. I believe that all Canadians and the House had better come to grips with it. There was the unprecedented intervention of big business with millions of dollars in an advertising campaigning in support of the deal, an advertising campaign whose spending is outside the bounds of the Election Expenses Act, an advertising campaign contributed to by individual companies across Canada which will appear on most tax returns as a deductible business expense.

In other words, the Canadian people will pay for half of that campaign. We intend to push for changes to the Election Expenses Act to put limits on third party advertising once and for all because it was abused immensely during this election campaign.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** There were also major corporations sending letters to their shareholders and letters to their employees with their paycheques in support of the deal in a campaign of fear. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and I believe Canadians ought to ask themselves, how much was spent? I believe that we need some good investigative reporting to dig out the total figure of what was spent on this issue on the government side in terms of taxpayers' money, in terms of Tory Party money, and in terms of big business money to win this election.

While I am on the topic of the media, I think it would also be a good idea for the media to take a look at its own role during this campaign. The fact that this Party

had to go to court to persuade the two major English speaking national networks to allow us to use material from the public debates in our own advertising spots is another subject that would make a very interesting topic for investigation.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** I think there were a lot of games being played, and I think that the Canadian public has the right to know who paid for what, and what debts this Government will be forced to repay over the life of its mandate.

The great strategists of the Tory Party are now trying to take credit for what they call "turning the election around". I read all those think pieces. But how did they really do it? Did they do it by responding to the message? Did they do it by engaging us in debate on the issue? Did they do it by arguing the merits of the case? Did they do it by debating the subject rationally across this country?

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** They could not attack the message because the message was winning, so they attacked the messenger. That is exactly what they did. As Allan Gregg of Decima put it, in an unusually frank interview: "We saw the bridge between the message and the messenger, and we had to blow up the bridge. We had to destroy the messenger's credibility", so they mounted an unprecedented personal attack on my character, on my sincerity, and on my competence. This negative advertising was imported for the first time into Canada from the Government's Republican friends in the United States. It was nothing short of the Americanization of Canadian politics, as the Government wants to Americanize everything else in this country.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** It was the most vicious campaign in Canadian history. I do not for a minute mourn my own personal loss. I have perspective in the history of this country. In political life, you win some and you lose some, and you have to accept the results whatever they may be. I fully accept the results of this election. I have always said that this issue was more important than any individual. I have always said that the cause was more important than anybody arguing it one way or the other. I am satisfied that the position that I advanced on behalf of our Party will be proven by history to be correct and that we are on the right side of history on that issue.