

Motions

will be raised, and that we need the documents. The letter is addressed to myself and it states in part:

Dear Mr. Boudria:

This letter is written objecting to the planned agreement on free trade with the U.S.A.

You are familiar with our operation on Cameron Street in Hawkesbury at which we produce textured polyester yarn in a modern plant with excellent high speed equipment. Should total free trade with the U.S.A. be placed in effect, we beyond doubt will have to close our plant in Hawkesbury.

I heard five minutes ago that a plant in my riding in Hawkesbury is threatened with shut down, but the Government is telling us we can only have hearings in a few places in the country. If that is not bad enough, we are supposed to hold hearings without the documents. So we will have hearings in a few selected communities, begin them in a hurry—something the Government has already orchestrated—and without documents. Plants in my riding are being threatened with shut-downs but that does not matter to Members opposite. They want to get this mess over with because it is an embarrassment to them. That is the only point upon which I will agree with the Government. It is an embarrassment because it was so poorly done. That in itself is no justification for hearings to go on in that kind of brevity without detailed documents and only in a few selected communities.

Of course, we want hearings. We want people to be able to speak on this issue, but we want the people to have the documents available in order to make informed comments. We want the Government to bring the committee to the people. The Government itself has said that this is the most important trade agreement in the history of mankind.

Mr. Darling: Right on!

Mr. Boudria: If that is so, if it is that important—that does not mean it is that good, by the way, it just means that it is that large—

Mr. Darling: It's good too.

Mr. Boudria: If it is that important, surely it should be able to stand up to public scrutiny. The people in my riding and the people in every other constituency in Canada should have the right to speak on it. Once those hearings are completed, then the people of Canada can look at the final deliberations of the committee, having conducted its hearings properly with proper documents. The Prime Minister should have the intestinal fortitude to—not to use other words—go to the people of Canada and tell them: "This is of such importance, I want you to speak to me directly as to whether you are in favour or against", not by means of a referendum, because we cannot have that in our parliamentary system, but by means of a general election. That is the way it should be done.

Meanwhile, the committee hearings should be conducted in such a way as to provide people with information first, good and thorough hearings second, and held in a number of communities where people can participate. The Government would then be able to see how my constituents in Hawkesbury

and elsewhere in the riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell think of this agreement. That is true of communities in every other constituency in Canada whether they are represented, albeit temporarily, by a Conservative Member, by a member of the Liberal Party or by a Member of the New Democratic Party.

I do not want to unduly delay this process, however, I have to indicate to the Government my dissatisfaction with a process which does not fully enable my constituents to participate and inform the Government of their views of this agreement. The hearings will not be held in enough communities in Canada and proper documentation is just not available. I say to government Members opposite that it is time they started to listen.

[*Translation*]

Canadians have had enough of this arrogance, Mr. Speaker. It has been going on far too long, and I would therefore urge Government Members—if they have any hope of being re-elected and, more important, of serving the Canadians who elected them and gave them a mandate to form a government—to ensure that, according to their own conscience, this job is done well. Mr. Speaker, some parliamentary committees—there is the committee on which I sat not long ago, which took weeks and even months to find out what should be done about our Canadian postal services. Our postal services are important. And what the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) himself qualified as the most important trade agreement in human history is even more important. However, if it is as important as all that, how can, and why should, Canadians be denied the requisite documentation and also the opportunity to testify before a parliamentary committee and, Mr. Speaker, I would also add, the privilege of making their views known in a general election?

● (1640)

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I hope that by now the Government realizes the strong dissatisfaction on the part of the Liberal and the New Democratic Parties with the manner in which the Conservative majority on the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade has decided to deal with the question of that committee's travel to hear evidence from Canadians on the Government's trade deal with the United States. Others have made very clear the reasons for that dissatisfaction. I will deal with those reasons very briefly.

Basically, we feel that the committee is not going to enough centres in Canada to allow Canadians, particularly people who cannot be identified as spokespersons of large organizations or big business, to express their views on the most fundamental issue that has faced our country perhaps since it has come into existence. It is not enough to have a committee visit only provincial and territorial capitals. There are many other places that deserve a visit by the committee for hearings to let people