

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

If only, Mr. Speaker, Senator Van Roggen's senatorial colleagues could be permitted the same freedom to decide, the same opportunity to arrive at their own independent judgment of what is in the best interests for Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Where is George?

Mr. Mulroney: Yes, somebody has said: "Where is George?"

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: The opposition Parties in the House obviously disagree with more than 250 leading Canadian economists who stated unequivocally in April of this year that the free trade agreement is:

"Canada's best option in a world threatened by increased protectionism, since it provides an historic opportunity to ensure a greater degree of access to the U.S. market than Canadian producers would otherwise enjoy... better investment opportunities... lower prices for consumers... and a higher standard of living for Canadians."

When you dispel all the myths, when you analyse all the alternatives, as responsible parliamentarians must do, you find that with its imperfections this free trade agreement meets the most fundamental test of all; it serves the national interest.

We have the ability to manage change. With this agreement we now have the instrument to ensure that we can manage change in Canada's national interest. There will be greater opportunity and more certainty in the future for our exporters, our investors and our workers. The decision we make on the free trade agreement is the key step in redeeming the promise of this great country. With this agreement, with sound economic management and with stronger scientific, technological, educational and literacy programs, we can build a much better Canada. We have a clear choice.

The 21st century can be one of enormous accomplishment for all Canadians. We have the brain power, the resources and we have the national will. Canada is young and Canadians can still dream of a destiny unattainable by most of the world. The free trade agreement, most of all, is about our most precious asset—our youth. The young people of Canada have been uppermost in my mind as Prime Minister throughout this long and challenging negotiation. They shall be the principal beneficiaries of this new trading agreement. They shall become the new leaders of Canada in a new world in a new century.

James Joyce, one of the favourite Irish poets of the Leader of the Opposition and myself, once observed that:

"The past is consumed in the present and the present is alive only because it gives rise to the future."

The free trade agreement is about Canada's future—one Canada, united, prosperous and strong with guarantees of prosperity and economic growth for the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: We cannot compete in the world by withdrawing from it. We cannot gain freer access to the world's markets by limiting access to our own. We cannot grow and

prosper by shrinking from opportunity and turning our back on reality.

[*Translation*]

We chose to negotiate not because it was easy, not because it was without political risk, but because it was in the national interest. We are proud of our distinctiveness as Canadians. We are proud of the values that mark us clearly as Canadians. We are determined to preserve and enrich those qualities which ensure a uniquely Canadian way of life. Our future will be built by Canadians doing their very best, providing world class results in a genuine national commitment to excellence.

[*English*]

All Canadians, those born in Canada and those who have chosen it for their home, can share in this great enterprise. Let us give them a chance to get on with the job. The decision is for all of us. Canadians have the fundamental ability, the skill and the talent to compete and to excel. As a government our responsibility is to provide the best environment possible to allow Canadians, individual Canadians, their chance to succeed. I believe we can do this by endorsing the free trade agreement today. By doing so we say yes to free trade; yes to jobs for our youth; and yes to a more prosperous future for Canada. We say yes to the great hopes and dreams of what this splendid nation can genuinely provide to our children, to the cause of freedom and to prosperity here and around the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the history of a country and a people is not written in one day. However, there are days in a country's history that are decisive for the future of its people, and the date of the next election is such a day. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) is the only person who knows when that day will be, but when Canadians go to the polls, they will decide what happens to the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, the agreement that is the subject of our debate today. Mr. Speaker, this debate concerns more than just our trade relations with our neighbours to the south. Canada's very future is at stake. The question is, what kind of country we will have at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Will Canada be independent, sovereign and autonomous, or will it be an American colony?

● (1650)

[*English*]

This debate is not simply about the future of our trading relationship with the United States. It is about the future of Canada. I travelled across this country again this summer from Prince George to Carbonear, from Québec City to Saskatoon. I have visited farmers, fishermen, factory workers, office workers. I have talked to new Canadians, I have talked