

Those who are so pessimistic, those Canadians who resist this initiative are essentially telling other Canadians that we have another option. We can import the products of countries which use sweat shop labour or which pay their workers 50 cents or less an hour. That is their preferred course of action. Yet they are the very same people who over the years insisted that we use embargoes and quotas to prevent the import of products from the developing world and those other countries which can produce much more cheaply than we can.

The fundamental point here is how do we become more competitive and gain more access to the U.S. market in order to learn how to compete in the world. There is no country anywhere else in the world that has a greater opportunity than Canada and a greater quantity of resources and educational institutions and human creative talent than Canada has to take advantage of this opportunity.

If we are to be competitive, we have to eliminate tariffs which protect our industry and the other tariffs which deny us access on a competitive basis to the American market. That is why the second most important ingredient of this agreement is to eliminate tariffs at a much faster rate than that projected under the schedule laid out under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. We are therefore committed in this agreement to removing all tariffs on trade and exchanges between Canada and the U.S. at the end of 10 years from the beginning of the agreement. The point is simply that tariffs are taxes on our producers. Whether those be tariffs and taxes against the imported products that go into our manufacturing base or the products our consumers inevitably bring in in an event, or whether they are tariffs against our own manufacturing sector imposed by American interests to shelter their industry from ours, those tariffs, which are taxes, are regressive.

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It is a fact of history that the tariffs erected by the American industrial sectors against our manufactured products have been higher and higher in relation to the greater degree of processing involved in the resources we export to the United States. The Opposition has always appealed to government, as I did when I was a Member on the other side of the House, to get more value out of our natural resources and end the dependency of being hewers of wood and drawers of water and shipping out all our resources.

It is, therefore, very hypocritical and inexplicable that they would resist this initiative which would reduce and eliminate the tariffs against our value-added production in order that young Canadians can escape from the bondage of shipping out our raw materials; natural gas rather than plastic bumpers for automobiles, two-by-fours or whole logs rather than packaged or modular homes, unprocessed fish instead of finished TV dinners and microwavable, low-calorie meals with all the vegetables and other products we can put into that package.

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

This attitude we are hearing from our opponents, which has very little substance, is all caught up in emotion and rhetoric. It is denying the Canadian people and the children of our future the opportunity to escape from the bondage of being hewers of wood and drawers of water, to become truly productive, and to maximize the value we extract from our natural resources, keeping those additional dollars right here in Canada where they belong.

With regard to the fisheries industries alone, I have travelled extensively across Canada. I have travelled in the north to Baffin Island, Pangnirtung, White Horse, and Yellowknife. I have spoken there on free trade. I have travelled to small fishing communities on the wharves of Wool Bay in Great Slave Lake and to Buctouche, New Brunswick, and all around the Atlantic Coast in the past few weeks. I have been through many fish plants and have talked to many workers. I have talked to many businessmen, many community leaders, and many in the service industry.

They have told me not to let the opponents in the House of Commons and the Senate deny Canadians this great opportunity to become a powerful, dominant nation in the world in which our young people can look to the future with confidence and optimism that they will have a satisfying career at the same time as making their contributions to the coffers of government in order that we can maintain and enhance our social programs and ensure that as a strong, confident nation we defend and project our sovereignty to the world.

All this nonsense about the fifty-first state and giving away our resources is totally contradicted in the essence of this agreement. This agreement is all about sovereignty. Any nation that lacks confidence in its own culture and its own social programs to the extent that it has to shelter and protect them behind the barriers of protectionism and isolation from the world reality is a nation which is poor and weak in spirit. A strong culture will survive in the world.

The British culture is strong and flourishing in the world, as is the U.S. culture, the French culture, and many other prominent cultures. Canadians are fortunate to be a reflection, through our multicultural heritage and policies, of all of those strong values. We are unlike any nation in the world. We do not need the narrow-minded attitudes of the Opposition or some members of the Senate to protect Canadians and our sovereignty, our culture, and our social programs from this great opportunity to enhance that sovereignty and increase the integrity of those social programs by becoming a productive, leading edge, technology-intensive nation which takes advantage of its resources and shows its goodness to the entire world instead of hiding behind the steel walls of protectionism. This is the challenge we offer to our young people, the challenge to eliminate this uncertainty which has arisen from the protectionist attitude emerging in the United States.