

Supply

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, it is an historic debate that is taking place in the House of Commons today. One might have hoped that the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) could have put aside his unctuous manner, which seems to afflict him when he deals with partisan issues, and attempted, as he suggested to us, to rise above partisanship, to make what we have to say something that speaks for the good of the country rather than for the good of a Party.

We have two countries with a great history of tremendous affinity or tremendous intermingling. In my part of the country particularly, it is an intermingling that takes place on a constant and continuing basis. To talk of Canadians as being anti-American is to miss the point. Our people are not anti-American. In fact, their experience with the United States is so great, so complex and so all-encompassing that they have found it necessary to develop a serious strategy of trying to deal with that colossus. Because it is a colossus with a certain kind of internal dynamic which cannot be ignored, an internal dynamic of tremendous economic expansionism, an internal dynamic which has driven its companies to the far corners of the world, but more important for our purposes, has driven its companies to the far corners of Canada, it requires us in turn, and has required us historically, to have a nationalist response. This response protects and defends our concerns and our interests as we face this expansionism. It is something that cannot be ignored by any government. It must not be ignored by this Government.

Many decisions could be made in this four years which could make it very difficult for us as a country to maintain the independence which we must have in a changing international world to be able to reach out to new markets and new parts of the world and to be successful economically. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs has put it, we must put our country first. However, to do so is not just a matter of verbal rhetoric, but is instead a matter of concrete policy, a matter of hard thinking and serious strategy. It is the absence of all three of these considerations which I hold as my condemnation of the Government's action with respect to U.S.-Canadian relations.

● (1240)

The Minister has suggested the Auto Pact as an example of free trade. I wish the Minister would read a bit of history and economics and get a sense that the Auto Pact is anything but free trade. It is not free trade with reference to its origins. The Auto Pact was started by what was in effect a retaliatory tariff against the United States. It was, in turn, created as a pact between our two countries on the basis of companies being involved and the two countries being involved. It was not free trade which was established. In fact, from our side it was a multilateral trade pact which permitted these countries to import goods from any part of the world, not just from the United States. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, it was a pact which had within it serious, detailed safeguards which dealt both with the number of cars which those companies had to produce

in Canada in relation to the number of cars which they sold in this country, and the level of Canadian content which had to be in those cars.

No one, including the Secretary of State for External Affairs or any other Minister, has ever put before us in the House a single suggestion that the free trade thrust which is presently taking place aims at that kind of defence of Canadian interests with respect to any single sector which is going to be debated or discussed with the United States. If such had been the case, the reaction of those on the Opposition side would have been very much different.

There is across this country a tremendous fear of free trade as it is being promoted by the Government. That is a fear which the Government itself has created. Admittedly, that fear was created with some help from ourselves by being completely secretive with respect to the Government's strategies. The Government held back every study that dealt with the question of free trade until the very day on which the free trade talks started. It then handed out those studies which were full of vast gaps. The ordinary person in this country could get absolutely no insight or serious understanding of what the Government was seeking with respect to those studies which had been undertaken. Therefore, secrecy created the fear to begin with.

Second, the Government took the low road of insulting the Opposition rather than the high road of recognizing that some of us have very serious doubts about what is being done to this country and what its future is going to be if we are part of a free trade agreement with the United States. Instead of addressing those doubts and talking about those serious concerns of not only Members of Parliament but hundreds of groups across the country, the Government retreated to a series of insults of which I could give you far too many examples today. We were called fretful, prophets of neoprotectionism, timorous and fearful, when we were only trying to defend the interests of this country, just as were those on the other side of the House. Yet, they refused to enter into a serious debate about the best course to take in order to establish what would make our country a better place in its relations with the United States.

There has been constant incompetence in the way in which the Government has followed the path of free trade from point to point. As it has taken us through a charade of negotiations with the United States there has been a lack of direction and a flip-flopping of rhetoric. Finally yesterday, with the supposed retaliation against the tariff on the shake and shingle industry, we saw the ultimate in nonsense brought before the House. It was the ultimate in nonsense because that retaliation did absolutely nothing for the 4,000 workers who were affected by the original decision. Absolutely nothing was done for them, despite the fact that we have legislation which could have provided assistance to that industry as a countermeasure to the tariff which was imposed on them.

Second, in a piece of ultimate flim-flam by the Government it attempted to pretend that it was putting high new tariffs on