

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

The first decision, taken in 1985, was the decision to seek free trade with the United States. The Prime Minister as a candidate in 1983 had given the conventional wisdom on free trade. We were too weak economically. Canadians were not sufficiently confident as a nation. It was a political graveyard. But as a Prime Minister in 1985, with all the evidence presented from a myriad studies, he realized the opportunity for free trade, the threat of protectionism without a Free Trade Agreement, and the maturity of this great country called Canada.

The Prime Minister had a choice. He said "yes", in spite of political risks. He decided in favour of what would be good for Canada.

The second choice was in May of 1986 when the Senate foreign affairs committee split 10-10 in the vote to start free trade negotiations with Canada. Politically, was this not the time to quietly bury the free trade initiative?

Again the Prime Minister had a choice and he said "yes", in spite of the political risks. He believed that free trade with the United States was what Canadians needed to grow to become stronger and more prosperous as a nation.

The third decision was in August of 1987. There was one month left at the negotiating table. Mr. Reisman told the Prime Minister that the U.S. side had not offered what Canada needed to make a good deal. The Prime Minister authorized Ambassador Reisman to break off negotiations.

That took political courage. That was one of the Government's major initiatives. Walking away rather than staying at the table to the end was risky. The decision paid off when, in the final days of negotiations, the United States side brought forward the proposals needed to make this a good deal for Canada.

The Prime Minister had a choice. He said "yes" to Simon Reisman, "Walk away", when the U.S. offer was not good enough, and "yes" to the Americans when the walk-out produced what we needed for a good deal.

The fourth decision was made during the election campaign, the day the Gallup poll came out after the televised debate. To the pundits and the political seers and seasoned observers like the head of the CLC, the Prime Minister's commitment to free trade would be his Waterloo. The Prime Minister did not buy that.

The Prime Minister knew that free trade was a good deal for Canadians. He knew that he only had a few

weeks either to turn back the Opposition's baseless allegations on free trade or to try to turn to other issues. He took the Opposition's free trade allegations head on. He decided to fight on the issue, to stand up for what he believed in, to defend that which was in the national interest. He and his Party won because of it.

Those are the four crucial decisions for free trade. They were decisions by a Government and a Party, but in the end, they were the Prime Minister's decisions. He took the risks. He made the right decisions. He demonstrated courage and great leadership. Because of that, Canadians will benefit from free trade for decades to come.

I look forward to the vote tonight, to the passage through the Senate and receiving Royal Assent next week, so that Canada can be a leader going into the 21st century.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate with the Hon. Member for Cardigan.

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): I would like to congratulate the Speaker on his re-election as Speaker to the House of Commons.

I would like to thank the people of Cardigan for the confidence they placed in me. I consider it an enormous privilege to serve as a Member of Parliament. I want to thank the people of my constituency for their recognition and to say it is an honour for me to take part in this important debate on Bill C-2, an Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States, better known as the "Mulroney-Reagan Free Trade Deal".

A majority of people in this country are opposed to this deal. In my riding of Cardigan, Prince Edward Island, there was an overwhelming turn-out of about 90 per cent who voted against this deal.

Mr. McDermid: Ninety per cent voted against it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the Hon. Member for refer to the deal as the Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. McDermid: Exactly.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): You can call it anything you want. Wait until I get up!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You can use the words "President Reagan", but when you refer to the Prime Minister, you must refer to him as the Prime Minister.