

Mr. Speaker,

I am a proud Canadian. I stand in a line of proud Canadians who have sought to secure for the people of Canada the benefits of Free Trade with the United States.

For over a century, leaders of Canadian governments have sought to secure those benefits. Then, as now, the Opposition of the day rose in a chorus that Canada's sovereignty, Canada's very nationhood was imperilled by Free Trade with the United States.

Those that oppose Canada-U.S. free trade...what Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1911 called the "freaks of unreasoning passion" ...cry out that you are not a true Canadian, you are someone willing to sell out your country, if you are for Canada-U.S. Free Trade.

Were those leaders of the colony of Canada any less Canadian for entering the reciprocity treaty with the United States in 1854? Who would claim that Canada was diminished or weakened as a result of this initiative. The opposite is true.

Were Sir John A. Macdonald and after him Alexander Mackenzie failing to serve Canadian interests for seeking to renew reciprocity with the United States in the 1870's? No, they were not.

Was Sir Wilfrid Laurier putting in peril the very idea of Canada when he campaigned in 1891 on "unrestricted reciprocity" with the U.S. and when he reached an agreement for this in 1911? No, he was not.

Were Canadian governments doing anything other than acting in the national interest in the 1930's when they entered two Canada-U.S. trade agreements to reduce tariffs? Did Canada become any less Canada as a result of these agreements?

Lester Pearson, denounced in 1965 for selling out Canada's auto industry. He went ahead anyway and signed the Autopact. He understood the difference between Opposition politics of calculated hysteria and Canada's national interest.

All these Canadian leaders sought the same thing - to give Canadians the opportunity to sell freely abroad and thereby build prosperity at home.