

*Canada—U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

Agreement is a major part of the right-wing agenda of this Government, this North American continental market-place agenda, an agenda which states that the Government of Canada has no obligation or responsibility to all of its citizens; that it is responsible only to the wealthy and the powerful, to those who have status and rank. "Oh, we will respond to those; but we are certainly not going to respond to the concerns of ordinary Canadians." And it is the ordinary Canadians who rely upon the political system to provide them with the answers that they need.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we as Liberals consider this debate to be not merely a debate about Bill C-2 and the Free Trade Agreement but a debate about the much broader agenda of this Government. Flowing out of the Free Trade Agreement, we will see not just the direct consequences for trade but the largest generational tidal wave of takeovers, of mergers, of business acquisitions—and this in a country that is already too much concentrated in terms of economic power. We are going to see it multiply multi-fold times over the next several years. The rules are no longer in place. The investment rules have been taken off. The competition legislation put into place by the last Parliament is now a weak and ineffectual instrument. As a result of the changes brought about by the FTA, we are going to see a major concentration of economic power in this country, far more than we see today. We are going to see a tremendous change in the whole ability of Government to be able to re-allocate resources from one region to another. It will be the market-place that dictates and determines the flow of goods and services in Canada.

We will not be able to provide the kind of counterbalance that Canadian Governments have historically been able to provide. That ability, under the new trade regime, will be limited. That, again, is a part of the larger agenda.

In terms of our foreign policy, our representation abroad, we will no longer have the kind of independence we have had to date. One needs only to look at what happened at the GATT meetings held in Montreal two weeks ago for the proof of that. It was absolutely crucial for this country to try to work out a deal on agricultural subsidies. And what did we see? We saw the Minister for International Trade and the Minister responsible for the Wheat Board simply aping and echoing the statements of the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, whose standard was that of clobbering the Europeans. As a result, Canada's ability to play the broker's role, the

honest middleman role in bringing about agreements, was lost.

We lost our ability to build bridges into the Third World, into South America, into Asia. We lost the ability to play the kind of conciliator role that Canada has played in international trade fora since 1948, a role offering to all of the parties an alternative, a different way of doing things.

Within a week of the November 21 election, this Government had abandoned that historic role.

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame!

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** As a result, Canadian farmers, to say nothing of people generally around the world, lost an important voice in international trade fora. We have lost the ability to engage in that kind of exercise at international trade fora; we have lost that "middleman" role, a role we played so effectively for over 40 years.

The consequences of this Free Trade Agreement, Mr. Speaker, are long range and long-term, and certainly they are much broader than simply the commercial trade pronouncements.

Let us look for a moment at our service industries. One of the great disappointments for me during the campaign is the fact that the Government was never able to describe to Canadians precisely what the FTA meant for our service industries. If one looks at the agreement, one will see that it now provides open opportunity for private American educational firms to challenge the educational role of our community colleges and universities, and our other educational institutions. We are going to undermine the whole capacity, through the Canadian educational system, to provide our own distinctive way of supplying educational services—and this at a time when it is absolutely essential that we have control over the whole worker retraining process.

One of the things that we can all agree on is that we have lost, or are going to lose, in terms of world-wide competition because of a lack of skills, and one of the primary vacuums that exist in Canada today is the lack of an effective strategy to deal with the upgrading and the improvement of the skills of Canadians.

The Minister of Employment (Mrs. McDougall) stands in her place and speaks of the Canadian Jobs Strategy. What she does not tell Canadians is that every year expenditures under that agreement have been