

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Since that point in time there has been a very deliberate effort to cut off all avenues of information. The \$30 million or \$40 million being spent by the Government on brochures and advertising is not for information. It does not detail what is in the Act or what are its consequences or implications; it is a sales job pure and simple. It is propaganda.

The role of Parliament itself has been victimized by this agreement. In the haste to get approval from Parliament every single procedure of open and fair debate has been rejected. Closure has been brought in at every single stage.

Mr. McDermid: Three hundred and fifty days?

Mr. Axworthy: The problem is that the Parliamentary Secretary spends more time in this House haughtily harping than giving any form of information. That is the attitude. They do not want to engage in a fair and honest debate.

They talk about misrepresentation. Well, misrepresentation started with a gentleman named Mr. Mulroney who became Leader of the Opposition and eventually Prime Minister, who said, in 1983, that he would never engage in a free trade agreement with the United States. Then, three or four months after the election, he introduced it. What greater lie could be told to the Canadian public?

In his platform in the election campaign he did not mention or even hint that his Government would bring in the most drastic, radical departure from the historical Canadian tradition that we have ever seen. He did not even talk about it, and now they talk about misrepresentation. Was the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) walking around all that time with a secret that he would not tell anyone? I do not know, but under the democratic process it is an absolute requirement that we are accountable to the public who are, after all, what democracy is all about. Democracy does not only involve this institution and Members of Parliament. Democracy is all about the individual voter. How can the Government justify not telling them the truth in the election campaign and now pretending that it has a mandate?

The problem was not only the then Leader of the Opposition; it was his colleagues as well. The gentleman who is now Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) said that anyone who would sign a free trade agreement with the Americans was naive. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) said that one would be a fool to sign a free trade agreement.

We can quote the entire front bench with the exception of the present Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) whose family, since 1949, has wanted not only economic union but political union with the United States. I give the Minister for International Trade a small mark for consistency. At least he and his family have made their intentions well known. They want to be American citizens. They said so in 1949, and I do not think the Minister has ever changed his opinion. This Bill will give him the key to open that door.

There is only one way of cleansing this incredible smirch and that is to let the Canadian public have another go at the Prime Minister. He must try to explain to the Canadian public why he thinks this is a good deal and let the opposition Parties explain why we believe it is not. The 18 million or 19 million Canadian voters must be allowed to decide who is right, not a Tory majority which has run out of mandate.

Do you realize, Mr. Speaker, that since World War II only three Governments have gone beyond the four-year term? This Government is already an aberration; it has already gone beyond the normal time of office for a Government.

Mr. McDermid: There he goes misleading again. The election was September 4, 1984. The Liberals are misleading again.

• (1230)

Mr. Axworthy: We have the chimpanzees rattling their cages again. There they go climbing on the swings and throwing bananas from their cages.

There is a simple solution. It is interesting that every time we start talking about calling an election Tory Members of Parliament get agitated. It is because they are scared. They are terrified at the prospect of an election. They know that the moment Canadians have in front of them that kind of information about this trade deal, the Tories will go down to defeat. They will not have the kind of support they had in 1984. That is why Allan Gregg is doing polls two or three times a week and rushing to Sussex Drive to say "Not now, Mr. Prime Minister, people still think you are untrustworthy. You still have not been able to convince people that you tell the truth".

The fundamental issue here is that when we talk about telling the truth, the people of Canada do not trust the Prime Minister to tell the truth. Furthermore, they do not trust him to negotiate a good trade deal. They understand full well that the Prime Minister has failed in all his negotiations. As a result, we are faced with the ultimate sell-out.

I suggest that the reason for supporting this motion is that the Bill should not be approved until the Canadian people have had a right to decide.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I moved Motion No. 22 in the list of motions we are debating. I want to make a case to the Conservative majority that this particular amendment is not only something that they should regard positively, but something which they should consider as a helpful and constructive addition to their Bill.

The amendment suggests that one committee that may be established by the Governor in Council, because it is a very useful committee, is one which would have the purpose from the Canadian perspective of monitoring what is happening under the trade deal. It could monitor many things, but three things that we see as especially crucial to monitor in order to assist Canadians to come to terms with this new trade context