

Extension of Sittings

Mr. McDermid: Nonsense.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): He said the U.S. had a very protectionist sentiment and would be attacking Canada at every possible opportunity in retaliation for our not accepting this free trade arrangement.

Some Hon. Members: Nonsense!

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Not only that, Conservative Members were saying in my constituency and throughout the Province of British Columbia that if this free trade arrangement did not pass, Canada would suffer economically and we would lose the ability to generate the finances necessary to pay for our social programs. In other words, those people across the floor said that if we did not get free trade, pensions would be threatened and health care programs would be threatened. They went around the senior citizens housing projects and made that threat and scared senior citizens into voting for this Free Trade Agreement even though it was contrary to their own interests.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kempling: No wonder they dumped you from the NDP.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): That is the reason they dumped the Tories in British Columbia. One after one they fell like dominoes. For the first time in history we elected a caucus of 19 New Democrats from British Columbia, a majority of Members from that province, who are opposed to free trade.

Mr. McDermid: About half the strength of the whole caucus.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): They are opposed to free trade.

Mr. Friesen: I have heard it all before.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): You have been in British Columbia and you should know better.

Mr. Kempling: Tell us about how you are a national Party.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Surrey—White Rock (Mr. Friesen) told us that in this House of Commons there are winners and there are losers.

Mr. Epp: We are listening to the losers right now.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, everyone in this House of Commons won his or her election. No question about it. Everyone received the confidence of the constituencies in which they campaigned and in which they worked.

Mr. Friesen: Now we know why you had such a stirring career as leader.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): In fact, it can be argued that those individual Members from individual ridings all across Canada received a mandate based on the campaign they fought in their constituencies. I can tell you that virtually every Member on this side of the House, representing 53 per cent of the voting public of Canada, was given a mandate to vote against free trade and do whatever they possibly could, representing those constituents in the House of Commons, to speak against it and attempt to prevent it from being passed. A tremendous number of Canadians—in fact a majority—are concerned about economic integration with the United States. They have not wanted it throughout this century. They have not wanted it for generations. They do not want it now. They made their opinion clear during the 1988 election campaign in which 53 per cent of the voting public voted for Parties opposed to free trade while only 43 per cent voted for Parties in favour of free trade.

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The clear majority is against free trade.

Mr. Epp: The Christian Heritage Party is for free trade. The Western Reform Party is for free trade.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): The majority of people in the country voted against free trade. They voted against it for good reason. That is because there are people in this Parliament representing that 53 per cent majority who as a result of the mandate given them by their electors have to vote against the free trade legislation as it is being presented.

My constituents voted for me for a number of reasons. They have in every year from 1972, through 1975, through 1979, through 1983, through 1986, and through 1988. They voted for me in order to give me a mandate to come here to talk to the people of Canada and to debate with the people in this House issues that they felt were important during the election campaign.

They asked me to bring a message about tax fairness. They were concerned that the Conservative Government has restructured the tax system in such a way that the rich, powerful and mighty get a free ride while those in the poor and middle-income levels are taxed to the point that they are broke. They would like to see some redistribution of the tax burden so that those who are getting a free ride will have to pay at least their fair share while those who are bearing the whole burden of taxes in the country get a little relief so they can spend, invest and make a positive contribution to Canada rather than having the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) suck one-third of their incomes out of their pay cheques every single pay-day.