

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Axworthy: The Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone) is quite right. Under Clause 2011 we are prevented from using many of those forms.

It is evident to me that what this Government said during the election campaign is not reflected in this legislation. There is a large leap between the commitments and guarantees that were offered to Canadians and what this Government is prepared to enshrine in the Statutes of Canada to give life, meaning and force to those commitments.

This Government has been entirely negligent in refusing this Parliament the opportunity to consider amendments which could at least give some modicum of reference to the commitments the Prime Minister so gallantly made during the election campaign.

The Prime Minister was scornful in his castigation of the church groups, the women's groups, and the Opposition generally, saying that those in opposition to the Free Trade Agreement did not know what they were talking about.

The refusal by this Government to accept this type of amendment will mean that those concerns will remain. Those groups will take no assurance from Bill C-2 in respect of the deep anxiety they feel in terms of what the Free Trade Agreement means for their future. The legislation before us will in no way satisfy their concerns.

[Translation]

One must understand that the Free Trade Agreement will have a negative impact on the cultural, farm, textile, agricultural and food sectors throughout Canada and on all organizations that made representations to the Committee and to Parliament during the last Session of Parliament. The hearing process is over, finished. There is no reason to disregard the amendments proposed by these organizations.

Also, Madam Speaker, I am appalled by the indifference of the Conservative Government *vis-à-vis* these organizations.

[English]

The purpose of the amendments was simply to provide some support, some succour, some sense of assurance to the organizations which have these concerns about the Free Trade Agreement—and they are in the majority.

The flavour reflected in the amendments is only one indication of the near inability on the part of this Government to understand what is going on out there.

While they like to pride themselves on being the hard two-fisted representatives of the business community, they don't understand what is going on out there. Perhaps they turned their hearing aids off as they went door to door during the election campaign. Whatever happened, they were not listening very well. They weren't listening to those Canadians who were lamenting for our nation.

These are not Canadians who are motivated by partisan feelings. Those to whom I spoke were ordinary Canadians, people not having particular ties to one Party or another. I heard high school students saying that, in the light of the Free Trade Agreement, they were mourning for their country.

When you have an 18 year old telling you that he is mourning for his country, that he is feeling that his future is being mortgaged—and those were the words they used—

Ms. Dobbie: Only because you are telling them that their future is being mortgaged.

Mr. Axworthy: I hear the Hon. Member for Winnipeg South (Ms. Dobbie) saying that they held this view mainly because of what they were being told. Well, it shows a great sense of confidence in the young people of Canada to think that they could be so easily manipulated!

I say to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg South that she will find out soon enough that Canadians cannot be manipulated. In fact, if any manipulation did take place, it was by Hon. Members opposite. I saw the kind of literature that she put out, and I can tell the House that she is going to pay a big price for that.

An Hon. Member: A one-time Member.

Mr. Axworthy: I saw the Chamber of Commerce literature that was flooding Winnipeg South, claiming that we have secure access—and oh, what a total lie that was; what a total fabrication that was. Talk about manipulation!

An Hon. Member: What about the stories to seniors?

Mr. Axworthy: We are hearing now remarks from the Tory back-benchers. They will not face the fact that many Canadians did turn against them. They cannot understand how it is that they lost so many seats; how it is that they lost so many cabinet Ministers. In the light of the fact that they lost so many votes across the country as a result of the Free Trade Agreement, one