

After 1965, it resumed its steady ascent under Liberal government again.

So for the better part of 50 years, ladies and gentlemen, the party of Reciprocity, the party of Sheila Copps and Lloyd Axworthy, presided unconcerned over this increasing concentration of our trading eggs in the U.S. basket. Nor do I necessarily blame them for that trend. Most experts will say it was inevitable, and we all know what a dismal failure the Liberals' "third option" policy was in the seventies. As last week's GATT study pointed out, the U.S. does occupy a "natural geographic role" as Canada's main trading partner.

What I do blame them for, however, is their repeated failure to accept their responsibilities, first in government and now in opposition, to seek the necessary arrangements that make of this situation a strength rather than a weakness. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is what the Free Trade Agreement is all about. The government of Brian Mulroney didn't create the Canada-U.S. trading relationship. In fact, since 1985 the relationship has declined slightly as a proportion of our overall trade.¹ But the government of Brian Mulroney has had the courage to take the bull by the horns and obtain for Canada a unique trading arrangement with the largest national economy in the world, an arrangement that is already giving Canadian workers and Canadian companies the competitive edge and expanded base they need to take on the rest of the world.

To my friend Bob White, I say that the FTA isn't the "corporate agenda" he is so fond of calling it: it's Canada's agenda. The jobs it creates are for Canadian workers; the investment it generates goes into Canadian communities; the competitiveness it induces in Canadian enterprise is what will pay for the great Canadian social safety net, long after Bob White and I are both gone. I congratulate him on his election last week, but urge him, in his new position, not to allow the doctrinaire protectionist agenda of the NDP to override the long-term interests of the Canadian workers he represents.

If the country had listened to Bob White's Canadian Automobile Workers (CAW) predecessor in 1965, we would not have today the Auto Pact which has served us so well and is so highly prized by Mr. White and his colleagues. With a

¹ 74.7 per cent in 1985, 70.0 per cent in 1990, on a customs basis.