

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

position to this Government. Members on this side of the House have a legitimate right to be here and have a mandate. They want to put forward their position to the Government. I agree that the Government has a mandate to govern, but it must govern responsibly. I suggest that the frequent use of closure motions essentially deny the rights of members on this side of the House to put forward the concerns of the majority of Canadians who are still very uncomfortable with this deal.

• (2310)

It is clear that we cannot stop this bad deal, but we can try to make it better. We propose to put forward some 26 amendments, if given the opportunity to do so.

As I said before, the Government has a mandate to govern. We have a mandate to put forward our position in a responsible fashion in order to convince the Government not to implement the agreement in its present form. This assertion is in question. It is also a fact that we on this side of the House have a mandate. We were elected to represent those frustrations, those concerns, and those fears of the majority of Canadians who still feel that this deal is a bad deal.

It is fair to say, even after spending close to \$30 million of taxpayers' money, that the Government has failed to convince the vast majority of Canadians that this deal is good for them. However, the Government still tries to blame us for its inability to reassure the country.

As for the NDP, I might say that it is nice to see that its Members have finally decided to help us out in opposing the deal. I feel obliged to point out that if they had focused their attention on fighting the deal during the election, rather than on the ineffective and futile campaign that they waged, maybe we would not find ourselves in this unfortunate position. Mr. Bob White also said that.

During the Leaders' debate the Prime Minister called this deal a commercial document—no big deal and cancelable on six months' notice. That did not surprise me, considering that this is the same Prime Minister who was against free trade in 1983, perhaps because of similar concerns to those that I now have. The Prime Minister also asked Canadians to take a leap of faith. However, I suggest that that leap of faith is into a pool which has no water. We as Liberals want to put some water in that pool by proposing some very constructive and positive amendments, if given the opportunity to do so.

Perhaps the Prime Minister should have referred to the positions taken by his predecessors Sir John A. Macdonald, Robert Borden, and John Diefenbaker. These wise men all understood that a comprehensive bilateral agreement with the United States, one that does not adequately protect our fundamental social, cultural, and regional differences, would be dangerous. They were right then and we are right now.

This trade deal is more than a commercial document. It is more than an agreement on tariffs. It does not provide the safeguards to protect our unique Canadian way of life and our values.

These values are reflected in the best social programs in the world, in our regional development programs, and in our cultural and environmental policies. We have always been a much more caring and generous people toward each other.

Unlike our American friends, our great social programs such as UIC, pensions, and health care have happened because Canadian Governments have made them happen, not because of market forces or the good will of big business. This is why over 37 million people in the United States live without adequate medical coverage and more than one million were turned away from hospitals last year. Our country is more than a corporate balance sheet and its people are far more important than that.

My home town of London is a major medical centre. Does the trade deal mean that the rich U.S. hospital corporations can come here and buy Canadian hospitals? While the deal only covers health management services, and we know that hospitals are within provincial jurisdiction, that does not end this concern.

Article 2011 allows either country to claim compensation if the other one takes any action that "causes nullification or impairment of any benefit reasonably expected to accrue to that Party, directly or indirectly, under the terms of the agreement". This is a critical clause. It means that the U.S. can claim compensation if Canada takes some action, even if it is not mentioned in the agreement. Article 2011 could allow the U.S. to demand compensation should its hospital corporations be prevented from expanding their services in Canada. An amendment limiting the scope of Article 2011 should be entertained.

London also has many small manufacturing plants. I am a little concerned that goods, partially manufactured in America but finished in Mexico under the Maquiladora program, could flood this country with