

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

mainly those for Quebec. Mr. Speaker, I simply examined my riding where the president—everyone knows that the leaders of Quebec's farm community were not in favour—and I did say the leaders—the leaders of Quebec's farm unions were not in favour of this free trade deal and they urged their members to follow them and not vote in favour of free trade. However, we could rely on a real army of candidates and Members who for weeks and months met with farm producers to tell them all about the economic benefits that would flow from the trade agreement. It was not easy!

I would like to pay tribute to my colleagues who toured the various provinces, particularly Quebec where I saw them meet farm producers at home and explain to them what it was all about. It stands to reason that farm producers were somewhat concerned because fears had been raised for over a year. Well, Mr. Speaker, I represent Bellechasse and was given a mandate by my constituents. My majority was 10,000 in 1984, but this time around it is in excess of 17,000 votes, which represent 65 per cent of the people. I am talking about 2,300 farms, the second riding in Quebec in terms of number of farms. The first is the riding of Beauce where the 5,000 majority in 1984 swelled to 22,000. Does the Hon. Member for Beauce (Mr. Bernier) have a clear mandate? Does the Hon. Member for Bellechasse have a clear mandate? I can mention others. The region of Saint-Hyacinthe with its 1,900 farms had a 1,200 majority in 1984 and it is now up to 9,000. Does the Hon. Member for Saint-Hyacinthe have a mandate? They will have to stop distorting the facts. I could list them all, Mr. Speaker. Those were just a few examples to show that Quebec and Canadian farm producers have just given a clear and strong mandate to our Government.

As my colleague the Minister of Agriculture said, Mr. Speaker, agriculture is a major aspect of the free trade deal, which goes to show that the federal Government is quite aware of the importance of agriculture in terms of the Canadian economy, not to mention our external trade. Canada's agriculture produces in excess of \$20 billion in annual income and, this bears repeating often, it accounts for one out of seven jobs in Quebec. I do not have the statistics for all of Canada, but in Quebec, one out of every seven workers is employed in the agri-food industry. This key industry is absolutely vital to all constituencies, both urban and rural.

Quebec farmers and farmers across Canada will reap profits from the Free Trade Agreement through wider markets. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to pass on a few comments that were made to me. Some people might accuse me and other members of my party of

talking at length about our respective constituencies, so I will only pass on a few comments made to me by people working in the agri-food industry. At the outset, we made firm commitments to maintain marketing boards. And we have honoured those commitments. Marketing boards will be maintained to enable milk, egg and poultry producers to remain competitive and to protect their domestic markets.

I have a few examples of this, Mr. Speaker. First, there is the Quebec Federated Co-operative. As you know, Quebec farmers have banded together in producers' associations and co-operatives. On February 26, 1988, the director of the Quebec Federated Co-operative said, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." The Federal Government has already taken major steps to make sure that the Free Trade Agreement enures to the benefit of the agri-food industry in Quebec. The final wording of the Agreement contains an explicit reference to Section 11 of the GATT. As requested, yogurt, ice cream and certain other dairy products have been put on the list of controlled imports. We made a commitment, Mr. Speaker, and we honoured that commitment. We kept our word.

Also Agrinove, an important dairy co-op in Quebec, just as Agropur is, and its General Manager said: "Although UPA suggests the agreement threatens our farming industry, Mr. Forcier, General Manager, stated during a press conference that free trade is good for our dairy industry. There is nothing in the agreement that threatens the major Canadian and Quebec policies and programs, including milk supply management."

These are dairy people speaking, Mr. Speaker, not politicians! These are people who are engaged in the day to day sale, production and marketing of agri-food products. I think we can trust them.

Also, Quebec's Minister of Agriculture and Quebec's Premier went on record as totally supporting the Free Trade Agreement. As often happens at the provincial level, sometimes there are dichotomies or opposition between major partners . . . and also opposition parties in Quebec, including Mr. Jacques Parizeau who is still President of the *Parti québécois*. I am quoting him on agriculture matters. Former Minister Jacques Parizeau "felt that the farming sector exaggerates the impact of the agreement doing away with farm tariffs. Stating he agrees with Mr. Bourassa on that matter, he pointed out that all support programs dealing with that sector remain unchanged."