

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

An Hon. Member: They cost more than a dime.

Mr. Blaikie: Yes. They just cost more than a dime.

I think my Leader covered it today when he began his speech with some philosophical analysis. What you have here is a kind of competing view of the world. It is really a religious argument. We have here people in the Conservative caucus who for so long espoused a view of the world in which they feel that the market-place should be sovereign, that regardless of the effect this agreement may have on Canada, they sense here, they sniff, a cosmological victory. Regardless of what the actual effect of the agreement might be, they feel that this Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement carves their view of the world in stone.

That is why they are willing, even if they represent grape growing industries or other areas that may be hurt by this agreement, or whether they actually, even in their heart of hearts, believe in some of the social programs—because some Conservatives do, but we remember that some did not—to swallow all this, repress it, and say, “By God, this agreement is a good agreement no matter what, because in this agreement we win the metaphysical argument that we have been having with the NDP for 50 years”. They like that.

What they do not realize is that the Canada that they love is a Canada that has been created out of the mix of political traditions that have existed in this country, that have fought with each other, in elections and between elections and in civil society, for a view of what the country is about. We are a different country precisely because we have had those different traditions. We are a different country because we have had a red Tory tradition that the United States never had. We are a different country because we have had a democratic socialist tradition that never got off the ground in the United States. We are a different country for a lot of reasons, and one of the reasons is because we have had the tension that exists between these various political traditions, which exists within parties, between parties, which overlap. Some of us are hybrids. What they do not realize is that in this agreement they are declaring that creative political tension to be over. They are buying forever, if you like, one particular view, which has its place in Canada’s political pantheon, if you like, but it has to be a place in Canada’s political pantheon and not the only idol in the political sanctuary.

What we are saying, and I will be right up front about this, is that this free trade agreement philosophically makes the kind of Canada impossible that the CCF and the NDP have fought for since 1933, and indeed before that, in the form of the Independent Labour Party and others.

An Hon. Member: Bravo!

Mr. Blaikie: The Member says bravo. That is the point that I want to make. I do not think that any political party has the right, including our own, through an agreement with the United States, an agreement that they sought no mandate for,

to declare an end to the political debate that has been going on in Canada.

Mr. McDermid: We can cancel in six months.

Mr. Blaikie: I will get to you in a minute. This is what the members of the Conservative Party propose to do, but they propose to do it not in the open. We have listened to the Parliamentary Secretary today talking about tariffs again. He did not talk about the fact that much of what his colleagues on the other side like about this agreement is that it does make the kind of Canada that the NDP and others have been working for in this political mix impossible. We will never achieve the kind of Canada that only we want, and we never should. But we should be in that mix.

What is happening here is that the Conservatives are about to achieve, by political stealth and deceit, what they would never be able to achieve directly. If they went directly to the Canadian people and said on an issue by issue basis “We want to institute a regime by which we will have unregulated foreign investment”, they would be thrown out of office. If they said: “We want to hamstring our national government so we will never ever again be able to have a national energy policy of any kind”—not just the one the Liberals had which was not all that great—then they would be thrown out of office.

● (2040)

Mr. McDermid: We campaigned on that.

Mr. Blaikie: The Tories did not campaign on that. The Conservatives campaigned against the Liberal national energy policy. They did not campaign saying they wanted to sign an agreement which would prevent us from ever having a national energy policy of any kind.

Mr. McDermid: This agreement does not say that.

Mr. Blaikie: It does so. Peter Lougheed said that before the committee. Read it. That is one of the reasons he likes the agreement.

If the Conservatives tried to campaign directly on whether or not we should seek to harmonize our social programs with the United States in any way, shape, or form they would be tossed out of office so fast it would make their heads spin.

What is done in this agreement is an attempt, as I said before, to achieve indirectly what the Conservative Party would never be able to achieve directly, to enshrine in this agreement for a generation their view of Canada, this neo-Conservative view of Canada, which is at odds with the other tradition that exists within the Conservative Party. It is actually more at home with elements of the Liberal Party of Canada, 19th century Liberals, and there are many in the right wing of the Liberal Party who are smiling—most of them in the Senate, but some of them here—because what the Conservative Party is about to do is the dirty work of the right wing of the Liberal Party.