

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

significant as it is, a majority that is greater than I for one would have anticipated, means that the Government, as a result of having won the election, very clearly has a mandate to an unusual degree. It has more of a mandate, perhaps, than governments had coming out of previous elections.

I am also conscious of the fact that there have been other elections in Canadian history in which free trade was a principal issue. That of course was true of the election of 1891 and it was also true of the election of 1911. In those election campaigns, the Party advocating free trade was defeated. One might well ask what is different this time, why is it the Party advocating free trade has been successful. The answer to that will probably be determined in the future by historians and economists, but I would suggest that the reason is primarily that our economies have matured significantly since 1891 and 1911.

There is indeed a new confidence in Canada that was not there earlier. The new confidence is as a result of some changes that have taken place in the world. The example set by the European community, the fact that small nations can work and trade with larger nations without losing their identity, sovereignty or culture, has given confidence going into this campaign, confidence on the eve of the Free Trade Agreement.

I would also suggest that the fact that we as Canadians have demonstrated our ability to compete with Americans these last few years has been significant. As we entered into this campaign and during the course of the debate in the last few months, many Canadians, though perhaps not all, have been mindful of the fact that we have been competing in trade with the Americans and that we have been doing so successfully. The fact that the balance of trade has been some \$16 billion in our favour during the course of the last two or three fiscal years is proof of our ability to compete, and I think that gave Canadians the confidence they needed as they wrestled with this question.

The confidence Canadians have in the administration of the Government over these last four years has also been very operative in the decision they reached during the course of the last election campaign. I speak particularly as a western Canadian, and I say with a considerable amount of pride and satisfaction that never in the history of Canada have western Canadians played such a significant role in the leadership of this nation as they have in the last four years. Many Canadians accepted that as being part of the decision-making process.

I would certainly not pretend for a moment that all Canadians who voted for the Progressive Conservatives on November 21 voted with a deep understanding of free trade. They did not. However, I think many who voted for our Party did so with the realization that they have confidence in those who were providing leadership to this Party. Having faith in the leadership of the Party, they were prepared to accept the management skills for the direction they have seen followed these last four years and have believed that those who are leading this Party and who have lead the Government for the last four years had the good interests of all of Canada at heart. They have confidence in them as they look ahead to the next four years.

However, a great deal remains to be done. I think of my riding of Brandon—Souris, and I would like to note in passing how appreciative I am to the voters of Brandon—Souris for having confidence in me and for providing me the opportunity to serve for the third time in this House of Commons. However, I would not pretend for a moment that all the residents of Brandon—Souris feel confident about free trade. In fact, they do not. Many have some real reservations about free trade. We as a Government must accept some responsibility for that. Quite frankly, I do not think we explained free trade as adequately as we should have these last few months, and that is one of the reasons for some of the difficulties we had during the course of the election campaign.

Perhaps we as a Government depended too much on the print media. Perhaps we forgot that we are in the age of television. I think we should look at that in retrospect. Perhaps we forgot for a moment that it is easy to frighten people in 30 seconds over television but it is difficult to reassure them in 30 seconds. As a candidate in the last election campaign, I am very mindful of the difficulties we encountered at about the time the Opposition advertising campaign began.

What troubles me about the last election campaign is the fact that there was so much fear generated by politicians. We have a responsibility as politicians, regardless of what Party we represent, to indicate to the voters what we stand for, the policies that we advocate and the plans we have in mind. What we saw too much of in the last election campaign was an emphasis on the part of some opposition Parties on what they were against rather than what they were for. This unfortunately contributed to some of the fear and uneasiness that existed.