

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Kilgour: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member knows there is a six-month termination period for the agreement. It is not a question that we cannot get out of very quickly. Does the Hon. Member not realize that this agreement enshrines the Auto Pact to the extent that if one wants to terminate the Auto Pact, which has been so important to the Member's province—we are all delighted about that—the entire international trade agreement will have to be cancelled? As the Hon. Member knows right now support for the Auto Pact in Congress is getting less and less. I put it to the Member that a great many families in his province will have more security of employment in the auto and parts sector from this agreement than they will if the agreement does not go ahead. I would appreciate his comments.

Mr. Caccia: Madam Speaker, that is a very thoughtful question. The Hon. Member raises it in his fine style for which I have the greatest admiration. I have to remind him that the Auto Pact was not in question in prompting this Government to run to Washington to obtain a trade deal of any sort. The Auto Pact is established. It is a sectoral trade agreement as the Hon. Member certainly knows. It was not in question so there was nothing endangering the future functioning of that measure which, by the way, was a fine Liberal initiative in the 1960s.

● (1220)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Resuming debate.

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I am really delighted, in fact I feel privileged to have the opportunity to speak on the final day of this historic debate on a matter of such great import to our nation. I am proud to be part of a government led by a Prime Minister who had the vision and courage to engage in these historic negotiations almost three years ago in the autumn of 1985 in order to secure for Canadians a long-term legacy which far exceeds that of mere access to U.S. markets and the economic benefits that will flow therefrom.

This free trade agreement represents an opportunity for Canada to step into the 21st century. It offers Canadians a chance to ask themselves whether we are grown up enough, whether we are self-confident enough now to take advantage of world markets. Are we ready to not merely rely on our natural resources and continue as so-called hewers of wood and drawers of water, but to turn those natural resources and our human resources to a much greater economic and social advantage for all future generations of Canadians. To turn those resources to our advantage, we will draw heavily on the products of our ingenuity, the talents of our young people, and show how proud we are as a strong and confident nation. We will display that message to the world as we engage competitively in world markets.

What we are dealing with here in the final hours of this debate is a basic choice between those rooted in fear, those who want to live in the past and who will invent every kind of phoney excuse to obstruct this great national objective, and those who project the confidence and enthusiasm our young people feel for the evolving world of technology, the needs of

the developing world, and the reality that it will become a major force in the world economy in future.

Mr. Langdon: Tell us about the fish.

Mr. Siddon: I will get to fish momentarily. First I want to say how proud I am of the initiative the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) took in creating this opportunity for Canadians. It grew out of this Government's commitment to expand our horizons, expand our productivity, expand our use of technology in turning our natural resources into a great future for our children.

As you know, the Macdonald Commission did extensive analysis of this issue, consulted widely with Canadians over two years, and recommended that we proceed in this direction. Over the three years of negotiations which culminated early last October with an initial agreement, the leaders of Canadian industry, business, trade unions, and all of the important groups in Canadian society, played a role and contributed to the evolution of this historic agreement. The heart and soul of this agreement, what it is all about, is competitiveness in world markets. Rather than continuing to shelter and isolate our industries, we will offer them the great opportunity of access to a much larger market. As a result, as the developing world becomes more prosperous and at the same time more dependent on our knowledge and our ability to trade, it will improve our ability to be price competitive in the international marketplace.

If we cannot sell our products, whether it be a natural resource or high technology, an intellectual product or professional service, on a price competitive basis in the largest economy available and open to Canada, that is the economy of the U.S., we will never sell those things in any other part of the world. Those who say that we can somehow ignore our major trading partner and not seek to gain increased and more secure access to that market are living in the 1800s. If we cannot compete, if our industries cannot produce products at a competitive price, which means at the same price or more cheaply than American industry, we can never sell to the Far East, the European Community or Australia.

We have to learn to be internationally competitive. That will create a great opportunity for Canada because, unlike the U.S. whose resource base is running down, unlike countries like Japan, Israel and Taiwan which have very few natural resources, we have all the resources in the world, to use a figure of speech. We have the young, well educated, talented people we need. We have the productive energy of a well educated, well trained work force in all sectors. The only thing lacking is the ability to meet the challenge of being price competitive in international markets. Those who advocate that we take another course, forgetting the U.S. market which takes 78 per cent of our exports, but rather turning to the Far East or Europe or elsewhere, have to realize that if it is tough to compete in the U.S., it is going to be much tougher competing against the Far East or the European Community which has its own free trade agreement.