

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Such services attest to the spirit of co-operation we have been able to create in trade union circles, industry, education as well as at other Government levels.

[English]

Members of the House are well aware that structural problems exist in our labour market that have to be addressed. Our level of unemployment is still too high in the regions. We are still producing skills that do not match demand. The relationship between the productivity of workers and their education is a question that continually preoccupies policy makers, and particularly this Government.

We must continue to take advantage of our resources and apply Canadian know-how and expertise so that our educated workforce will be tuned in to the realities of today's labour market. It will call on the involvement and co-operation of Canadians from every sector to participate and accept some responsibility in that. This Government is totally committed to ensuring that Canadians have the best possible labour market programs. We have programs already in place that are working. We anticipate whatever advice Mr. de Grandpre and his committee will present. We are prepared to act on their recommendations.

Adjustment means change, but it also means opportunity. What Canadian workers must know is that we will draw on the resources not just of the Government but of all the communities of Canada to help Canadian workers take advantage of opportunity, to help them when they are in need of change after a lay-off and in need of assistance. All of us must be there for our workers to ensure that they can take advantage of opportunities, to ensure that, in troubled times, we are there to help them. Adjustment does mean change, but the Government must help with the opportunities that are. We intend to ensure that we will be there for Canadian workers, rather than waste time trying to decide whether an opportunity or a problem comes from free trade, comes from technological change, or comes from labour-management relations. What is important for Canadian workers to know is that whatever the circumstances, whatever their region, whatever the product their company makes, whatever future they want for themselves, this Government is there hand-in-hand with the company, with management, with the unions, with the provinces, for Canadian workers. We will continue to be there for them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, on June 18, 1936, the new Member for Essex East spoke in this House for the first time. His name was Paul Martin.

I can do no better than to begin here with his words, and I quote, "I feel conscious of my responsibility and trust that my remarks will meet with the approval of my constituents."

[English]

My father had been in the House a year before he spoke that I have been here less than two weeks. Times have certainly changed. But as that young Member did 52 years ago, I would like first and foremost to thank the voters of my riding for their trust without which I would not be here.

[Translation]

The riding of LaSalle—Émard has two waterways of historic importance for our country. They are the Lachine Rapids, a unique ecological entity, from which the exploration of the North American continent began, and the Lachine Canal, which has contributed so much to the economic development of Quebec.

Together, my constituents are a microcosm of the Canadian mosaic, an enthusiastic and dynamic community. I would like to say here that I am proud to be their representative.

[English]

I cannot count the number of times as a young boy I sat in the galleries above and watched the debates below. In recent years I have had the occasion to visit the legislative chambers of a great number of the world's democracies. Some are older than ours; some are more famous; and many are larger. But I remain convinced that none is more representative and more true to the character of its people than this House.

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I have worked in the corporate world where members often believe the real power over the country's destiny resides with them. I have visited the offices of the Ministers and great bureaucrats who dwell in this city. There, too, I have been told that it is there and not here that the real power lies. In both cases I have never believed it.

For me, elected office is one of the highest callings a citizen can have. As such, I deeply believe in the traditions and dignity of this House of Commons, although I sometimes wonder whether that view is as