

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, certainly we are in agreement with the proposal put forward by the Deputy Government House Leader with the proviso, of course, that we think the debate should be going on for several months more—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy:—and we should have an election before the vote, but aside from that we are quite happy to go along with this particular suggestion.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree. I also want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my friends in the Official Opposition and the Government for their generosity in allowing my leader to complete his remarks.

Mr. Mazankowski: Let us make it reciprocal.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I could say that what the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) expresses gratitude for is at the same time in keeping with the traditions of this place. I appreciate his making the remarks he did.

Continuing debate with the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I rise to support this Bill which will give Canada a new, more certain and more beneficial trade relationship with the United States of America.

I believe it is a good agreement for Canada. It is an idea older than Confederation itself whose time has finally come. It will stand the test of honest scrutiny. It is I believe genuinely in the national interest. The free trade agreement is necessary to secure access to our most vital market and is consistent with policies which are already strengthening our economy and improving the well-being of Canadians.

We on this side of the House support the free trade agreement because we believe it will bring prosperity and economic benefits to Canadians from coast to coast.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: Free trade will mean lower prices for Canadian consumers, better jobs, and greater individual opportunities. Free trade will help the regions of this country. It will do so by creating a broader and deeper pool of national wealth, not just by redistributing existing resources.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, free trade will help us to sustain our social security programs. Nothing endangers them more than economic decline. Nothing guarantees them better than an expanding economy. The values we have as Canadians and the distinctive quality of life we bring to North America will be enriched by free trade. By strengthening our economy, free trade will help us support cultural programs that enhance the

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capability of our artists, writers and performers to express themselves to Canadians and to the world. Free trade will also improve our capacity to strengthen our national programs ranging from the environment to regional development to child care.

Free trade will strengthen our foreign policy. It will be welcomed globally as a beacon of hope for the forces of more open trade, particularly, Mr. Speaker, among developing nations and as a bulwark against protectionism.

My purpose today is to outline the rationale for this initiative, measure the results against our objectives, separate myth from fact, and assert the reasons why I believe this agreement deserves the support of all Canadians.

• (1540)

[*English*]

Almost four years ago the Government received an overwhelming mandate for change from the people of Canada. It is a mandate that we are doing our very best to honour with vigour and determination. Several years ago, before I entered the House of Commons, I set out an agenda for Canada.

First, I said that the new Government must establish that special relationship of trust at all levels with our allies, including our greatest friend and ally, the United States of America. Second, we have to send signals around the world that investment capital is welcome here and that this is a good, an honourable, and a decent place to do business. We have to state clearly that the private sector is the only motor whereby new wealth, new jobs and new opportunity can be created for Canadians. I also said that we must energetically stand and press for the lowering of barriers to trade because trade is our life-blood. In that direction lies our future prosperity.

Government in Canada must see its role as creating, with the private sector, a greater and freer access to world markets and higher levels of trade. That was true when I made that statement over five years ago and it is very much true today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: That is precisely what we have delivered during our mandate. More Canadians are working today at rewarding and satisfying jobs than ever before. Inflation is low, the dollar is strong, business is expanding, and consumers are confident. The Canadian economy has out-performed all other OECD economies over the past four years. Relations with the United States have improved substantially. The sour mood and the petulance of the seventies and early eighties is gone. When neighbours quarrel, everybody suffers. When neighbours co-operate, everyone benefits.