

Free Trade

saying, however, that on a matter as crucial as this, surely there was a responsibility and an obligation to explain.

I call to the attention of the House that at the beginning of this debate a cabinet document found its way into opposition hands. This document outlined the communications strategy for the launching of the trade debate. What was that communications strategy? It was basically to keep Canadians in the dark because it said that if Canadians find out what it is really all about, they will oppose it. That is what the document said. It is not something that was conjured up by—

Mr. McDermid: Produce it.

Mr. Axworthy: We will. I will be glad to table the report. I would be glad to have it on the public record.

The fact of the matter is that the debate has been that way right from the start. Has the Government ever given Parliament any clear demonstration of evidence to support its claims? No. Before a Commons committee, the deputy negotiator, Mr. Ritchie, when asked where the studies are to justify his claims for jobs, said that he did not have them.

Mr. Horner: Economic Council of Canada has them.

Mr. Axworthy: Oh, let us stop here. I heard echoing from a mental chamber on the other side that the Economic Council report is their justification. If that is the justification being used by Hon. Members opposite, may I ask why it is that the Economic Council report did not include as a basic premise the service industries to justify its job claims? The service sector only accounts for 60 per cent or 70 per cent of all jobs, but it was not included in the council's report. Furthermore, the Economic Council report said that its assumptions are based upon the fact that Canada will have an exemption from U.S. trade law. Do we have an exemption from U.S. trade law? Of course we do not. So much for the Economic Council report.

If that is the slender reed upon which the Government is basing its case, then God help this country. In fact, the Director of the Economic Council of Canada himself said that they could not give a forecast based upon the present agreement. He said that it would take until at least February to get the numbers. Of course, in the meantime the Prime Minister will already have signed the deal. So much for the evidence of the Government.

Let us continue to discuss another part of the process. The Government brought in its October 4 document and said that it needed a couple of days to brush it up and put the lawyers to work and then we would have a couple of months to debate it. A committee was formed before there was a final document. The committee was instructed to hear from Canadians and, of course, the majority of the members of the committee were so democratically minded that they defeated proposals that invitations be issued to the public at large. They said no, they did not want the public at large corrupting their committee process.

We asked for additional hours of hearings when we were in each city. Of course we were not allowed that. We were allowed a one-night stand in each provincial capital in order to hear presentations. In the Province of Quebec, in which there are six million people, six briefs were heard. That is a grand cross-section of Quebec society, to say nothing of all the other provinces.

That may be the Tory Star Chamber interpretation of democracy; that may be the kind of inquisitorial interpretation that Tories apply to it which means not giving people a chance to participate, but it surely is not a proper examination or opportunity for Canadians to be heard.

Then we got to the point we are now at. We were to have the committee report, but the deal has already been signed, sealed, locked up and delivered with a statement that we cannot change anything in it. It is a shotgun wedding. That is the only way to describe it. It is a gun to the head of the Canadian public. The deal was already forged before it was even made public.

We know what the consequences will be. A very important statement was made by the Anglican Archbishop, the Primate of Canada, before the committee. He said that the Government has a moral obligation to explain the consequences of its acts. He said that the Government has not done that. We are still waiting for that moral obligation to be fulfilled.

• (1210)

The process speaks for itself. I contend that it is not in the national interest to totally ignore democratic rights in this country, especially because the Government is committing what one can only call the big lie of propaganda. The Minister repeated it this morning when she said that this is only a trade deal.

The agreement we are debating goes far beyond the conventional process of bringing down some tariff barriers or dealing with non-tariff barriers. How can a Minister of the Crown say that it is simply a trade deal when there are clear limitations on the rights of this Parliament to deal with questions of foreign investment in the future? How can the Government say that it is only a trade deal when there is a direct limitation on the right of federal and provincial Governments in the future to establish Crown corporations the way they see fit? How can it say it is only a trade deal when the way in which we manage our resources and set prices for energy and other resources is clearly prescribed, limited and handicapped by this deal?

Section 409 states that all goods can no longer have discriminatory pricing set on them. It is hardly just a trade deal when every jurisdiction in this country that wishes to trade a good or service with the United States will no longer be able to set different prices to Government action. That is not trade, it is a direct limitation on the sovereignty of every Parliament and assembly in this country.