

Interprovincial Trade

● (1730)

I think if we as Members in this House of Commons want to reflect somehow on the dream that most Canadians have, that dream has to be a dream in which we build our country from the bottom up, through planning, through organization, not through some kind of market based unrestrained allocation of resources.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): There is a guy who doesn't trust anybody. He thinks the Government can better do for them than what they can do for themselves.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I must at the outset of my remarks in response to the intervention this afternoon by the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) say that I regret very much the literally supercilious argument that we have had from the socialist in this Chamber. He waffled and was on all sides of the question. He was in favour of a great Canadian community but "By God, we have got to plan it. We can't trust anybody to do it himself. Don't trust the private sector".

What did the distinguished Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) say? Just as my socialist friend, he was on four sides of the question. I lost track when he was waffling through the third one. Where was he for 20 years? Where was the Liberal Government for the last 20 years except asleep at the switch? Let there be no equivocation whatsoever, this Party stands for free interprovincial trade. We stand for the removal of the barrier, the lowering of the difficulties that frustrate interprovincial trade.

Mr. Langdon: Especially in Newfoundland.

Mr. Forrestall: I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism (Mr. Valcourt) who, God love him, if he is watching, I hope is resting comfortably. He is in hospital with some minor difficulties. Bernie, I will do my best. I am pleased to report on his behalf that he and his provincial colleagues, Ministers responsible for regional and economic development, met last October to discuss this very issue. They did agree in principle. Unlike my socialist and Liberal friends, there is some common sense among our provincial counterparts with regard to a very substantial program, substantial in the sense that it is an historic first step. We will recommend to the First Ministers the putting in place of mechanisms to begin to deal with the questions raised by the Hon. Member for the Western Arctic.

The Minister will recommend to Government and through the Government to the First Ministers the establishment of a priority short list that will really move this question off centre, off the base it has apparently been stuck on for some years. We will start with Government procurement policies. We will look particularly, for example, at liquor regulations that cause enormous problems between the provinces.

If the First Ministers accept these recommendations, and I would hasten to add that recent events encourage us to believe that this will be the case, the federal and provincial Governments will be embarking on a very historic process of reducing barriers to interprovincial trade for the first time. This process will bring long-term benefits for all Canadians by stimulating growth and encouraging a dynamic and a relatively more competitive economy.

The agreement which was reached on October 29 has, as its origin, a recognition by the federal and provincial Governments that increasing interprovincial trade can be an important means for stimulating regional development. With access to the larger Canadian market, competitive firms will be encouraged to grow and become more competitive. This is particularly important to firms located in the less populous regions of the country where markets are often too small to support an economically viable operation. For such firms, ensuring freer interprovincial trade could well be crucial to their continued growth.

Encouraging interprovincial trade will also encourage the development of a dynamic and competitive economy. That is, after all, what we are after. Entrepreneurs in all parts of the country will have greater access to the wider Canadian market. Those with the ability and ambition to take advantage of the opportunity will become those entrepreneurs who will be our success in the future.

Encouraging the development of competitive and dynamic businesses is essential to Canada's long term economic well-being. We are, as we all know, heavily dependent for our well-being on our ability to export and on our ability to compete in foreign markets. In today's world, foreign markets are increasingly competitive. Only the most competitive suppliers can succeed. For our own good, we must encourage Canadian firms to become competitive internationally. How better to do this than by first encouraging Canadians to become more competitive within Canada. But to do this, Canadians must first have access to as wide a market as possible within Canada. When I talk about market, I refer to the topic areas that range through the whole spectrum of our culture and economic well-being. They range and touch upon everything.

On this subject of international trade, I should note in passing that the said practices that result in barriers to interprovincial trade also result in barriers to international trade. Consequently, some of them will arise in the context of our trade negotiations on an international basis. I would like to emphasize, and I am sure the Minister would want me to do so, that we are concentrating on the domestic effects of these practices rather than on their role in the international trade discussions.

The Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney) will be dealing with their effect as barriers to international trade in another context and at another time. Needless to say, whatever happens on the domestic front, Mr. Speaker, and this is the point we are trying to make, will be of importance on the trade front, just as the trade negotiations will have to be factored