

• (1640)

We all know the New Democratic Party did a basic rethinking of where it went wrong. Most of its partisan supporters were quite upset that rather than attacking the free trade agreement as we did in the 1988 campaign, it simply attacked our leader and our party.

The free trade agreement as is and the NAFTA legislation as is are obviously unworkable and are not in the best interests of our country. In fact, the trade minister said as much in that he is not pursuing the leadership of his party. That is because he will be seen as the father of the free trade agreement and the father of the GST. Therefore, he is admitting that he will be unsuccessful, largely because of that record which would be the ball and chain not only for his potential candidacy but also for the other candidates of his party.

While those agreements are wrong, it is equally wrong to say that the only solution to those trade agreements is not to have an agreement, that the only reaction to flawed pieces of legislation is to simply rip them up and pretend they do not exist any more.

One has to be responsible. We have had a free trade agreement in operation whether we like it or not. Thousands and thousands of individual decisions have been made by Canadian businesses, entrepreneurs and individuals. It would be completely asinine that the first reaction of an NDP government, which will never see the light of day, but notwithstanding that the first action would be to simply rip it up. You would probably be making losers out of winners, and the losers are still looking for some answers.

It is the same thing with the NAFTA. Therefore, a better solution rather than simply turfing out both those agreements would be to take a look at where those agreements are flawed. Take a look at defining what a subsidy means. Address the question of dumping. Look at the structure of our Canadian plants and businesses and infrastructure. Let us see where the losses and the wins are coming from and try to right the wrongs. Try to go back with the Americans and the Mexicans and take a second look at the situation, just as the Clinton administration is approaching it with the side agreements.

To simply say: "Elect us and we will rip things up" or "elect us and you will not see the GST, but do not ask us where we are going to get the \$15 to \$18 billion" seems a bit too trite, even for the New Democratic Party. Yet it

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persists. It throws this resolution on the floor thinking that somehow it is going to trap someone along the way. However, the real object of the exercise should not be to play those cheap partisan political games on the backs of those Canadians and industry. It should be to begin to look at these two agreements and seek the changes and modifications needed to ensure that those agreements are better.

Whether we like it or not, the Americans are our best trading partner and vice versa. Whether we like it or not, countries like Argentina are taking a look at the NAFTA. Members of our party not too long ago met with Argentina's minister of industry, Mr. Cavallo. He is a very impressive individual and is the author of the Argentine economic miracle. He mentioned to us that his country is seriously looking at a future round of the NAFTA. I suppose there is nothing wrong with that, as long as Canada is protected, as long as we are defending number one in that legislation. Then we are being responsible.

That is why we take a different position from not only the substance of the NAFTA but also the process. It seems to be absolutely unconscionable that we are going to be considering enabling legislation on the NAFTA when the main one of the three partners in this so-called agreement has put its own position on hold *vis-à-vis* the NAFTA until the Mexicans begin to whistle their tune.

• (1645)

We ought to take a page from that strategy and say that we are not prepared to enter into an agreement unless and until we are satisfied that it works for the benefit of Canadians too. That is very different from saying that we are going to put the blinkers on and there will be no trade agreement. It does not matter if it is the lifeblood of an economy, the heck with it.

Do you know what? That is what Bob Rae did. He put an agenda and a platform together that sounded very good. It appealed to the traditional supporters of the New Democratic Party because they figured that the NDP would not have a chance to ever be government. However, the most surprised person in Ontario on election night was Bob Rae. All of a sudden he became the premier, but he had an unworkable, unrealistic platform. In the end the platform was abandoned. The New Democratic Party has alienated its own constituency. At the same time it has alienated just about everyone