

The Address—Right. Hon. Brian Mulroney

I have a great deal of respect for the Leader of the Opposition. But look at the contempt that that signifies for the Canadian people. What an insult to their judgment, their intelligence and the very purpose of democratic debate during an election campaign.

Yesterday, again, we witnessed a return to talk about selling out and shutting down and tearing up and all of those other splendid phrases that the Leader of the Opposition used so often and so long. I thought that the people of Canada had shown last November what they thought of these tactics—Canadians do not want empty rhetoric. What they seek from a Government is a consistent, coherent, confident plan of action. That is what the Government brought forward.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition was blaming an awful lot of things on the Free Trade Agreement. He was decrying it again. He was indicating that people voted for the Free Trade Agreement because somebody bought their votes. This is very injurious to ordinary Canadian voters. But I was interested in comments made not last week, but last night by the Hon. Jean Chrétien speaking in Hull. I quote what he said last night as quoted in *Le Journal de Montréal*, an article by Jean Denis Girouard, their distinguished parliamentary correspondent. He says that Mr. Chrétien last night said—

[Translation]

I was proud of Quebecers who showed their enterprise and boldness by supporting free trade during the last election campaign.

Mr. Chrétien says that Quebecers did not vote for free trade because they were bribed or bought but because of their enterprises and boldness, and for once I could not agree more with Jean Chrétien.

[English]

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, if Mr. Chrétien only got to Hull last night, Mr. Peterson got to Paris. There is a message there somewhere, but I am not sure what it is.

But lo and behold in *The Toronto Star*—and if it is in the *Star* it is accurate—there is a report that states the following. Let me quote:

At a luncheon hosted yesterday by the Paris Chamber of Commerce, Peterson made a strong plea to liberalize and expand trade between Europe and North America, despite protectionist pressures. . .

Both sides, he said, must take advantage of the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement and the decision by the European Community countries to form a single market in 1992. . .

Meanwhile, Ontario Trade Minister Monte Kwinter who, like Peterson, and was an opponent of the trade deal before it was signed, is telling French investors that the deal provides them with an excellent opportunity to enter the U.S. market from Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: As my mother used to say: “You can dress him up, but you can’t take him out”.

• (1140)

In light of the kinds of comments that were made yesterday, and I don’t plan to rebut every one that was made by my right hon. friend, I think it is important that I draw something to his attention, given the fact that he seemed very strongly to be making the case that there had been some kind of a mistake. The voters had made a mistake. The Liberals should have won the election. This is a temporary aberration. I draw to his attention an excellent article by Andrew Cohen that appeared yesterday or the day before that deals briefly with liberalism and it says this—I don’t believe he is a supporter of the Conservative Party, but he says:

It won’t show in the figures, but the sharpest increase in cross-border trade since last November’s elections is surely in the mutual consolations of grieving Liberals. Though they have been out of power for several years in both Canada and the U.S., it is only now starting to sink in that perhaps this is no mere fluke, an endearing little show of defiance by an electorate that still knows its natural rulers, but is a rather stiff repudiation. . .

The Liberals lunged straight for the moral jugular; their opponents are always not only wrong, but evil or at best complacent.

This is the true source of the decline of modern liberalism.

It no longer stands, as it once did, for the downtrodden. It stands for privilege; for the systematic distortion of economic activity to benefit well organized pressure groups. It is not about summoning the strong to the aid of the weak.

It has become a squalid auction of state favours to the highest political bidder. John Kennedy challenged Americans to “ask what you can do for your country”. Liberalism in Canada as in the U.S., invited the powerful to ask what their country could do for them.

There is the difference between liberalism and conservatism today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: Maybe it would be helpful, rather than to do what my right hon. friend did, to take a page from the very thoughtful expression or view by the Member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) in a number of speeches after the election in which he indicated, well, you know, maybe the other guys didn’t steal the election, that maybe there is something that the Liberals should be looking at themselves. Maybe we are not perfect and maybe Canadians and Québecers will look at us again if