

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

Before I recognize the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry, I want to assure other Hon. Members that I notice they are indicating that they may have a contribution to make.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be addressed specifically to the issue raised by the House Leader of the Official Opposition concerning the omnibus nature of the Bill and whether that document should be considered admissible in the House.

I believe the Minister of State (Mr. Lewis), the Deputy Government House Leader, has in part put his finger on the nub of the matter. He said that the real issue is whether this particular Bill enables the people of Canada, through their duly elected institution of Parliament, to have the fullest, broadest, and most extensive examination of what I believe we all agree is one of the most important legislative initiatives to come before Parliament since the Second World War, as stated by the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie).

My comments are based upon the principle of what is the most effective way we in this Chamber can assure that Canadians will not only have but will be satisfied that they had the opportunity to be heard and to have their concerns responded to.

We know the old cliché about what is in a name. Simply calling this a free trade Bill does not make it exclusively a free trade initiative.

As one goes through the pages of this legislation, it is clear that it covers a much broader and more extensive range of interests than those one would normally consider trade interests. Normally, trade legislation deals with changes to tariff rules and occasionally ventures into non-tariff areas. However, the concept of trade has a very strict and fairly well defined generic use relating to the increase or reduction of those barriers between countries.

My argument is that this legislation goes substantially beyond the principle of free trade and into changes in areas that are very much within the domestic economy and affect a broad variety of sectors in this country. In fact, it affects our entire economy and social fabric.

Let me give one clear example. What does investment have to do with trade? The change in financial institutions is not a trade matter, but clearly a question of how one regulates the financial management of the country. Yet, that is contained in the Bill.

Clearly, the question dealing with Crown corporations, whether federal or provincial, is not a trade matter. Yet, it is an issue that is within the scope of this legislation.

Clearly, the matter of energy supply is not a trade issue. It very much concerns the control over basic natural resources in Canada.

I could go on to give examples from the annexes which deal with health services, the question of management of professions, education, the environment, and a whole host of matters which have enormous ramifications for this country. When one considers that this Bill affects virtually every Canadian, Parliament must be concerned about how and to what degree those Canadians will have an opportunity to make their case.

I was a member of the special joint committee in 1985 which was commissioned at that time simply to examine the principle of free trade. The hearings lasted more than two months and sometimes extended into the late hours of the night, listening to perhaps 25 representations per day, yet we were only talking about a principle and had not seen the enormous complexity of the Bill. Even at that point we barely touched the surface of interested parties who wanted to be heard.

We must take into account that the Minister for International Trade is saying that the Government will force this measure through by the end of July. If it is to force it through on the basis of an omnibus Bill, that means it will use its majority between now and the end of July, and it will be impossible for Canadians to be heard. It will be impossible for people in agriculture, in energy, in financial services, or in cultural fields to have an opportunity to make their case.

The only way for the Government to meet the timetable set out by the Minister this weekend is to have a number of Bills, each focusing on a specific sector. Then there could be a series of hearings in a variety of locations throughout the country, so that those who feel directly affected, whether it is in printing or the food processing industry, would be able to make their case in front of a select committee where there may be some expertise, as our House Leader suggested, and they could focus on those areas.

We must take into account the practicality of the issue. In order for Parliament to deal properly with such a massive initiative, it requires a series of separate legislative initiatives, focusing on each sector that will be affected in order to facilitate the matter.

I suggest that the Deputy Government House Leader made that very case, although I am sure he did not intend to do so. He pointed to the parallel between this and the energy Bills implementing the National Energy Program in 1982. It dealt with only one sector of the economy and it affected five or six different pieces of legislation.

When one turns to the back of this legislation, one sees that we are dealing with 27 different pieces of legislation, including the Broadcasting Act, Canadian Wheat Board Act, Canada Grain Act, investment Acts, Meat Inspection Act, National Energy Board Act, Textile and Clothing Board Act, Trust Companies Act, and others. Fundamental changes are being made to the operation of government legislation and regulation in each of these areas.