



Rob Galbraith

Exchange students Judy Forrest (l) from Strasbourg France and Betsy Mulligan from Hartford Conn, had a howl at 1964 Friday night.

Frequent applause for free trade forum

by Boris Zvonkovic

"We don't have a free trade agreement here, we have an economic integration agreement," said U of A professor Dr. Bruce Wilkinson last Thursday night at a public forum and discussion on free trade.

Sponsored by Albertans Concerned About Free Trade, a non-

partisan, non-profit organization whose goal is to "gather, research, and distribute information about the implications the trade deal will have on Canada and Canadians," the forum attracted a vocal audience of 300-400 at the Tory Lecture Theatres.

Other speakers included Ellie Robson, a health educator with

the Edmonton Board of Health, Reg Basken, national president of the Energy and Chemical Workers Union, and Art Macklin, vice-president of the National Farmers Union.

Interrupted by frequent bursts of applause, each speaker tore into the pending bilateral trade agreement between Canada and the United States, explaining the negative effects it would have on each of their particular fields.

The prevailing sentiment of each speaker was that the free trade agreement, in its present form, will be of little or no benefit to Canada, and will, in the long run, be an overall detriment to Canadian society. "We did not get the glorious new export op-

portunities promised us with the free trade agreement, nor did we get guaranteed access to the American market. We are still subject to all the same U.S. rules as before... we in Canada have given up an enormous amount in order to get a very minimal reduction in tariffs," Wilkinson explained.

Reg Basken confirmed this by saying "we did not get access to the American market for Canadian products, except for one, natural resources... because we have the oil and natural gas and they (the Americans) want it."

Ellie Robson questioned whether Canada could maintain its social democratic traditions and values in terms of quality health

care and social programs under the free trade agreement. "Certain gains are being held up in the free trade agreement, but they are questionable against the probable loss of what Canadians have come to value."

Another prevalent opinion expressed by each speaker was that the federal government of Canada has been purposely misleading in regards to the free trade agreement.

As Dr. Wilkinson stated, "in my twenty-five years of being in economics in this country, I have never seen an issue where there has been so much deception... concealing of basic facts by the government."

Wilkinson went on to warn Canadians that "this trade agreement is the biggest decision that Canadians have had to make since Confederation... Canadians better be well aware of what we are getting into."

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