

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

Trade said that water was not touched by the agreement and that they did not have to put anything about it in the agreement. When the hearings started, more and more expert evidence was heard to back up our point of view. Finally they did put a clause in the agreement. However, it took weeks of debate.

It was bad enough last summer when the Government put on time allocation and rammed the Bill through. However, it did not do it as quickly then as it is doing it now. The point is that to make this impact in the House of Commons, it often requires days and weeks of debate to get through to these people and to impact on the public opinion which develops outside the House.

Just as we were successful to a certain extent in getting the Government to agree to exclude water from the Bill and, through the Bill from the agreement, though we would like to see it excluded in the agreement itself, we want the Government to live up to the statements it made during the election campaign and exclude regional development, the environment, labour standards, unemployment insurance, social programs, and hospitalization. Government Members say that these things will not be hurt by the agreement. Fine, let them put that in the agreement.

As I said, the Government will ram this Bill through in any event. We will vote on second reading tonight at 1 a.m. I suppose tomorrow we will go into Committee of the Whole, another closure motion will be put on that stage and government Members will ram it through in a day or two. Then we will get to third reading, and they will ram that through. This is from the gang that gave us parliamentary reform. They are the ones who said that one of their great achievements was parliamentary reform. As a matter of fact, it was hard to keep from being sick while watching the Prime Minister on television during that great debate claim parliamentary reform as one of his great accomplishments, while they had suspended all the rules of the House last summer to ram through all the Bills they wanted to ram through. They have done so again in this particular debate.

Whenever the Government cannot put through something it wants to put through, when it cannot play the game under the ordinary rules, it simply suspends those rules. It is too bad that the Toronto Maple Leafs could not do the same thing. They might win the Stanley Cup. They could change the rules to suit their own team and their own purposes. They should follow the example of the Government.

This is going to be rammed through in any event, but if we are to have it, let us at least have some wording in the legislation that will exclude the matters to which I have referred. Let the Government announce, before we have a final vote on this Bill, that it will set up special adjustment programs.

On the night of the election, the Prime Minister said that he had won the election, he had won a majority Government, and he was now going to work on reconciliation because the election had been a very divisive one. We have been waiting for the programs that would bring about this reconciliation. The Prime Minister can start by showing us a special adjustment program for the workers and the firms that will be hurt by this agreement.

• (2000)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of State (Agriculture)):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to take part in this debate on the historical Free Trade Agreement with the United States. I am almost tempted to tell my colleague, the Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) that the most obvious benefits we get from the parliamentary reform is the election of two Progressive conservative governments in a row, an event unheard of in the last hundred years, and which has been most beneficial to Canada. This is probably why the people of Canada has given us a second mandate. By giving us a vote of confidence on November 21, the population in general, and the farming community in particular, have undeniably shown their support for the decisions we have taken in recent years, all in the interests of Canadian farmers.

Our commitment to these people is very clear, and I am glad that it was recognized.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, how happy I was on November 21, the night of the election, to realize that the farming population of Quebec, with whom I have worked more closely in the last 15 months, understood and accepted our message. We won in all the rural constituencies of Quebec, except one, but I haven't lost hope there, Mr. Speaker! In some next election, we will get all 45 seats, and that would make me very happy.

In the last few days, the Opposition has often mentioned that the Government has not received the mandate to go ahead with the free trade deal. I thought that was a bit cranky, so I looked at some of the figures,