

the Senate to an appeal from the Canadian Vietnam veterans to the federal government to provide national capital lands for the site of the Canadian Vietnam veterans national memorial.

[Later]

ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO MONITOR MATTERS RELATED TO THE FEDERAL ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Hon. Pat Carney: Honourable senators, I give notice that tomorrow, Wednesday, February 23, 1994, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources be authorized to monitor all matters related to the implementation and application of the Act to establish a Federal Environment Assessment Process (previously Bill C-13); and

That the committee report to the Senate no later than June 30, 1995.

QUESTION PERIOD

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

STATUS AND ACCEPTANCE OF NAFTA— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. John Lynch-Staunton (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question to the Leader of the Government is as a result of an address given by the Minister for International Trade, the Honourable Roy MacLaren, in Davos, Switzerland, on January 29, in which he discussed Canada, the global economy, and particularly our country's position with respect to international trade.

The purpose of my question is to try to reconcile the minister's statement with what we heard during the last election campaign, what we read in the Red Book, what we went through in 1988, and what was repeated to us recently regarding the Liberal government's approach to NAFTA. In other words, what we have been hearing over the past few years — adamant Liberal opposition to free trade — appears to have been totally contradicted by the minister.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh! Oh!

Senator Lynch-Staunton: If honourable senators on the other side were to read what they said during the debates on the FTA and NAFTA, they would have to admit that I am not far from the truth regarding their approach to free trade.

The minister said in his speech that the recently proclaimed North American Free Trade Agreement, which Liberals in this chamber voted against, can also provide a complementary tool for expanding opportunities for Canadian exports. Therefore, honourable senators, despite the vote by Liberals against the

[Senator Marshall]

enabling legislation on NAFTA, a minister of the Crown, a member of the Liberal Party, comes out with a most constructive interpretation by saying, and I quote, "NAFTA can provide a complementary tool for expanding opportunities for Canadian exports."

My question to the Leader of the Government is: Does this mean that the government is now trying to dispel the fears displayed in the past in this country by the Liberal Party? Does the Liberal government today finally see reason?

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I would first of all take issue with an initial statement made by Senator Lynch-Staunton to the effect that the Liberal Party has an adamant opposition to free trade. That, as all my colleagues around me will attest, is not the case. It is true that we carried on vigorous debate on two occasions on the propositions that were put forward by the former government.

I have not seen the speech given by the minister in Davos. I would be interested in reading it. Mr. MacLaren is a vigorous advocate for the trading interests of this country all around the world.

The Prime Minister himself, shortly after the election campaign, entered into discussions with the President of the United States on this and other matters; a number of agreements were made between the two countries involving the final position of our government on NAFTA. We will be working on trade arrangements that will produce the best possible results for this country, both in the United States and in Mexico.

Indeed, yesterday morning I was meeting with officials from Mexico to support the further activity that we will be pursuing there. There will be a ministerial visit next week, and the Prime Minister himself will be going to Mexico in March to take up the opportunities that this country will find mutually beneficial in that arrangement.

Senator Olson: It is better than it was.

Senator Lynch-Staunton: No, it is not. There has been absolutely no change in the North American Free Trade Agreement and absolutely no change in the NAFTA legislation. This government signed exactly what the Conservative government had been promoting over the years, and that includes the FTA.

Senator Olson: The problem lies in the interpretation.

Senator Lynch-Staunton: It is not a matter of interpretation; it is a matter of fact.

When the minister says she has not read the statement, it makes me wonder whether she is trying to detach herself from her colleague's comments.

Senator Fairbairn: Not at all.

Senator Lynch-Staunton: I will read further from this statement, since the Leader of the Government has not had a chance to read it herself.

This was a major policy statement on Canada's position on international trade. It was not just a passing comment. This was a well-prepared, thoughtful statement made in front of a prestigious international audience.