

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

I spent 10 days, as did the Minister of State for International Trade (Mr. McDermid), at the GATT. Some of us were down there. We know what that is like. It is very difficult to deal with 95 countries to get agreements. We provided an opportunity for members from the Liberal Party and the NDP to be part of the process. They are such enthusiastic supporters of GATT. We never heard a peep out of them. We could not find hide nor hair of them. Where were they?

Mr. Nunziata: That is not true.

Mr. Mayer: They did not show up. We would have done everything we could to have made them part of the process. I asked about them. Where were they? They did not come near the place.

What are their alternatives? Do they want to print and borrow it? There are 25 million people in the country. Better access and more secure access—and I am talking about agriculture and other areas of opportunity to us—that is what this agreement is all about.

The NDP members want to tear up our NATO agreement and our NORAD agreement. They want to ignore or to pretend that we do not have allies in defence and that we do not need them.

The Liberals want to tear up the trade agreement. I do not understand why these people are afraid of our allies. Why should they be afraid of our allies? There is a large country to the south of us with which we have very good relations. It does not mean that we will always have everything our way and that there will not be disputes. Sure, there will be disputes. When as much trade is done between Canada and the United States as we do, there will be disputes. But, with the dispute settlement mechanism in place we are provided with a much better opportunity to deal with disputes in the future than we have had in the past.

Mr. Nunziata: It is not binding.

Mr. Mayer: When there is a large market, the agreement provides us with better access and more secure access.

Mr. Nunziata: It is not guaranteed.

Mr. Mayer: I did not say that it was guaranteed. There are no guarantees. When there are better opportunities to deal into that market on a more secure basis, why are Members opposite so nervous about entering into the agreement?

What I find discouraging about the process that we are going through here tonight, and we have been going through it for almost the last year, is that there are no alternatives offered. It is an interesting ploy that when one cannot offer an alternative one stands up and misrepresents, distorts, twists, and exaggerates. One tries to frighten people. One says that everything will be awful and that everyone will lose their pensions and their identities. They say that the Americans will come up here to take our medicare cards out of our pockets. When people are afraid hopefully they will do what is wanted of them. That is not what we are as Canadians. We are good at what we do. We are good in so many areas.

Mr. Nunziata: It was Brian Mulroney who tried to deindex pensions.

Mr. Mayer: The Hon. Member has mentioned pensions. One of the reasons we can have those kind of programs in this country is that we generate wealth. We produce. A big part of our production has to be exported. With the agreement we have a much better opportunity to continue to generate the type of wealth that we need to go on with our social programs.

As I pointed out, the only alternative that we have ever heard from the opposition benches and in their being critical of this deal is to print the money and to borrow it. We know that that does not work. We know that this country was not built like that. It was built by people who wanted to make the country productive. It was built by people who came here for an opportunity to make it productive. That is what this agreement does. It provides us with an opportunity to continue to be productive by giving us better and more secure access to a large market. That is what the agreement does.

I look forward to the results of this agreement. In terms of agriculture we have protected our marketing boards. There is nothing in the agreement that in any way changes the way the Canadian Wheat Board will operate. There is nothing in the agreement that does anything but provide a better opportunity for our farmers to sell. With the high quality product that we produce, that has to be of a benefit to farmers. If it is of benefit to farmers, it is of benefit to the whole country. Farmers are important to this country, which is why this agreement is so important as far as agriculture is concerned. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) who negotiated this deal did it on the basis of providing opportunities. We in agriculture have very significantly