

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Canada is about the only country of the world which does not enjoy a secure access to a market of over 100 million consumers.

Also, Mr. Landry mentioned in his speeches in Senneterre and Rouyn-Noranda the rise of American protectionism which threatens the economy of Canada and Abitibi. It is jeopardizing trade as a whole between Canada and its greatest economic partner.

In March, long before the election campaign, Bernard Landry also rejected offhandedly the apprehensions of those who feared for the survival of social programs.

We heard Bernard Landry speak with commentator Pierre Pascau in a program that was rebroadcast during the election campaign, that so many listened to back home, all over Quebec and that gave us such tremendous help.

Let us not forget also the contribution and support of the Prime Minister of the province of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, who gave us a hand in such a masterly way.

I would like to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by noting that free trade will not put our small and medium businesses at risk. There is no reason to believe that the small and medium businesses of Quebec will all of a sudden be eaten up by big American corporations once free trade will be in place with the United States, claimed Mr. Tom Peters, one of the most famous management gurus. He said in an article, and I quote:

But for every business, no matter where on the planet, the basic question is not whether it is changing but whether it is changing fast enough, in an environment that has become totally unpredictable.

Mr. Speaker, during the last federal election campaign in Abitibi, the Liberal candidate told the people that Quebecers were going to be squashed by the American elephant. Today, Mr. Speaker, the future belongs not to the elephants but to the gazelles!

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to express my support for the Free Trade Agreement.

[*English*]

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to address my new colleagues in the House tonight. I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to the people of Ottawa Centre for the support and encouragement that I received throughout the recent election campaign. I want to thank them for believing in the Canada that I believe in, a Canada that is strong and free, a Canada that respects the individual and provides opportunity.

• (2220)

On November 21, the voters in Ottawa Centre put their faith and trust in me. I am committed to honouring that trust by representing all the people of my riding. It is because of this commitment that I am standing before you tonight.

When I made the decision to seek election as the Member for Ottawa Centre, I did so fully aware that as a federal representative I would be dealing daily with matters of a national and international nature. But, I must admit, I never dreamed that my first speech in the House of Commons would be in defence of our economic, cultural and social identity. I am, of course, referring to the issue before us tonight, the Government's proposed free trade legislation, legislation which, in my opinion and in the opinion of more than 50 per cent of the Canadian people, threatens our very nationhood. Never has there been an issue which has so dominated an election campaign or the lunch hour or dinner table discussions of a nation. Never has there been an issue which has so divided Canadians.

We are well aware that no nation will ever be completely self-sufficient. Therefore, it follows that no nation can survive without some degree of international trade. The basic needs and wants of our society are better served through the exchange of goods and services across the borders. For as long as people have been exchanging goods there have been others discussing the best ways and means to achieve it. The 19th century economist David Ricardo advanced the theory of comparative advantage to explain the economic basis for world trade. His theory hinges on the relative advantage any one country has over another in the production of specific commodities.

For example, the United States can produce automobiles more cheaply than Brazil. Brazil, on the other hand, can produce coffee more cheaply than the United States. In this instance, it will benefit the United States and Brazil to trade with each other.

Why does Canada trade with the United States? Why does the United States trade with Canada? Obviously, it is because each country has something the other country wants. Unfortunately for Canada the United States wants our raw materials. When our final trade barriers go down, American branch plants located within our borders will be tempted to pack up and go home.

Mr. McDermid: Why?