

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

export their products to be able to prosper and create jobs for our people back home, in Lotbinière. These people have realized that by taking their cars or trucks and driving a few hundred kilometres to the south of the Lotbinière riding, they could reach a concentration of over 100 million consumers. They have managed to understand that, these businessmen and women back home. On the other hand, they have realized that by covering the same distance, not southward, but eastward or westward, they were still within the Quebec borders. In this respect, Mr. Speaker, the project proposed by the Conservative Party to our businessmen and women certainly made sense.

These men and women include Mr. Guy Boulanger, from the Boulanger corporation in Warwick which specializes in making doors and mouldings, and which in its field has become one of the most important manufacturer in Quebec, if not in Canada. These people have realized that free trade was already a "fait accompli".

The fact is that for the past twenty-five years, more specifically since 1963, which is not so long ago, Mr. Speaker, the average duties collected by our Canadian custom officers on all goods imported from the United States decreased from 10 per cent to 3.5 per cent, a reduction of over 6 percentage points. I wish to emphasize that the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement will bring about a reduction of these duties from 3.5 to 2.5 per cent, only a 1 percentage point.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, over the past twenty-five years, we have demanded from our businesses, for their modernization, expansion and consolidation much more than we are going to ask for during the next ten years following the full implementation of the so-called Free Trade Agreement. But again, that is something that the people in Lotbinière, the businessmen and women, as well as the producers fully realize.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, you certainly remember that in 1986, we were forced by the Americans to levy a 15 per cent tax on our softwood lumber. Unfortunately, at the time, there were about a dozen items which were affected by this tax. Do you know what the next item would have been? Mouldings. You can understand that the Boulanger corporation in Warwick, among others, was keeping very quiet about this situation. It was afraid that the negotiators would finally reach that item. Thanks to the Free Trade Agreement, they can breathe more freely today, because they used to have no protection whatsoever against

American protectionism. Thanks again to this Agreement, we now have a number of mechanism to block the extension of protectionism.

This may be a sign of the times, Mr. Speaker, but do you realize that for its mouldings, the Boulanger corporation in Warwick must purchase its raw material in the United States? It has to bring this raw material home and transform it. It creates jobs for our people and sells its finished products to the Americans.

That is the kind of ability and foresight our business people and citizens in general now have, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say here, Mr. Speaker, that we as a party never claimed that the Free Trade Agreement as such was the end of all our problems. This Agreement, Mr. Speaker, was always presented as a challenge, one that we believed our business people, our producers, and, I repeat, our workers, could meet. But that, Mr. Speaker, obviously depends on the Government being able to give them appropriate policies. So again, in the last election campaign, it was important to be credible. Now what party in recent years could show such credibility? Is it a party that was in power for 25 of the last 30 years and ran up a total debt of \$38.3 billion a year, not a decade, or a government that in four years has reduced the debt by \$10 billion?

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we gave our business men and women, our producers, support policies so that they could consolidate, modernize and, in short, meet the new challenges that we were offering them. And if we did so over the last four years, obviously we can continue to do so. Besides, we already have some policies in place. The Department of Industry, Science and Technology has just implemented programs to follow up the consolidation and modernization we began. That is foresight. That is what we offered the citizens, the people in my riding, and they answered yes.

Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the various speakers for some time. Not that I claim to bring anything new, because I think that everything has been said. But you will agree with me that the Hon. Members opposite have not brought anything new either. But I would nevertheless like to point out some things that are unfair, Mr. Speaker. I recently listened to the Hon. Member for "Arctic Power", Mr. Speaker, and I congratulate her for her election, but certainly not for her positions. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, on December 19, she said, as reported on page 367 of *Hansard*:

During the campaign, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) stated that regional development programs were not at risk.