

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

American market. But they must be given the opportunity to do so.

For 20 years, the Liberals tried to subsidize companies that had trouble surviving. It was like putting band-aids on wooden legs, Mr. Chairman. They never solved the problem. With the means at hand, we tried to solve the problem effectively. We saved Petromont. We invested millions, but in an intelligent manner. We enabled this company to compete, to restructure, to go after markets that were closed to it until then.

So, Mr. Chairman, if the Montreal area can have access to the American market, if it can produce high tech products, if it can produce finished products, what will it do? We will sell them to the Americans. Indeed, we have already started. Look at companies like Spar, which produces the Canadarm for the U.S. shuttle—

An Hon. Member: It is made in Lotbinière.

Mr. Ricard: It is made in Lotbinière—even better. There must be some small screws made in Lotbinière.

Mr. Chairman, we realize that Canadians can do.

Mr. Chairman, I remember the demagoguery the Opposition parties resorted to in 1984-85 when we talked about giving Crown corporations back to private enterprise and decentralizing. We then had the first company sold to private enterprise, namely de Havilland. I remember that very well because at the time I was chairman of the Committee on Regional Economic Expansion and we had held hearings on the sale of that corporation to private sector interests. I recall that at the time someone said that if the Government were to get rid of Crown corporations it would kill that industry, create unemployment and witness the exodus of Canadian brains to American companies since Boeing was then the prospective De Havilland buyer.

We also had the privilege of listening to Mr. Bob White who had come to make representations.

An Hon. Member: Not Bob White?

Mr. Richard: Bob White, in person.

An Hon. Member: The leader of the NDP?

Mr. Ricard: The future leader of the NDP. He came here with his retinue of 15 or 20 people and attempted to laugh at the state, to ridicule the Canadian Government. He was not aiming only at the Conservatives, Mr. Chairman, the Liberals too were a target because, naturally, for Bob White absolutely nothing exists

except socialism, the NDP and socialism. As far as he was concerned, any sale of a Crown corporation to the private sector was a scandal, soon to degenerate into a cancer.

We witnessed the same scenario when Canadair management decided to sell some of their shares to private interests. The same people came to the House, they appeared before the committee where they made demagogic statements and accused us of every sin in the book, they came to tell us we were selling this country off to the Americans, they came to tell us that we were getting rid of our heritage, Mr. Chairman, our heritage!

Now if we consider the results of these sales, this privatization, without actually saying that we created jobs, the fact is that these companies almost doubled the number of workers they had at the time, they increased their profits three and four times over. That is what they did. The beauty of it is that the additional provincial and federal taxes and every other tax related to their purchasing power enabled us to justify fully the loans we had made, and then some.

I said that the Montreal region is home to a number of high technology industries like Spar in the riding of my friend the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadioux), Canadair, Paramax, Canadian Aviation Electronics, each one a high tech undertaking which would stand to gain a lot. But in order to achieve this, Mr. Chairman, the Bill under consideration first has to be adopted. We must adopt this Bill because it is the tool we need to amend the laws that will enable us to develop our high technology.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to talk to you about the Space Agency. During the election campaign, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner) said that the space agency would be built in the Montreal area. If you take a look at last week's newspapers, you will see that a dozen of the members in his caucus want the agency to be built in Ottawa. It is obvious that the Members involved are Opposition backbenchers. The fact remains, however, that the Liberals can't seem to get together to decide where they want the space agency to be built. They wanted to trip us up by trying to pit us, the Members from the Montreal area, against the Members from the Ottawa area for the space agency. They wanted to create a rift between us.

Mr. Chairman, on this side of the House we did not stoop down to that demagoguery, we did not trip over. We did not compromise ourselves. The Prime Minister (Mr.