

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: The Prime Minister has taken part in this debate and has now listened with respect to the Leader of the Opposition and myself. I believe that his life experience—and we can debate about this—as a former branch plant manager has so internalized the values of the market-place as being pre-eminent that, unlike Sir John A. Macdonald and John Diefenbaker, he sees no possible contradiction between the national good and the continental market good.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: It follows from this kind of thinking that the only criteria brought to bear—and we have heard it in debate this week and in the past six months inside the House of Commons and outside from the Conservatives—by the Government in assessing the historical implications of this deal are market criteria. If you understand the Canadian national essence in such a limited way, it is no wonder that you will blithely sign a deal that will permit, over time, that essence to disintegrate. A nation protected by such leaders is not protected at all. A nation wise to the consequences of such leaders will vote those leaders right out of office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Rather than stand up for Canada, the present Prime Minister has handed over control of our future to the United States of America. Clayton Yeutter understands that. I quoted him earlier. Ronald Reagan understands that, and I quoted him earlier. I say to the Prime Minister today that “you, Sir, have let the people of Canada down”.

[*Translation*]

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: In the 19th century, Madam Speaker, a Conservative Prime Minister who had an altogether different vision of the role and place of Canada on the North American continent set us on the road to independence. In fact, the Prime Minister we have now is not offering an alternative vision. He is willing to accept that Canada should become the Northern United States.

From the very beginning, the implementation process of this agreement has been the opposite of what the Prime Minister had promised in 1984, from a so-called open and transparent government.

At first, the Prime Minister was against this proposal, but no sooner had the Prime Minister met Mr. Reagan for the first time during the Shamrock Summit that he initiated a process which in the end will hurt Canadian men and women.

The Government never encouraged discussions. In fact, it tried to hamper them every step of the way. All summerlong, our colleague, the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon), did a tremendous job in committee on this issue for our party and for Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: He moved a great many motions to protect the interests of Canadians, but the Conservative Members on the committee always turned them down. For instance, the NDP motion calling on the committee to travel and listen to

Canadians everywhere in the country was defeated by the Conservatives. The public hearings where witnesses had no time to be heard were sinister jokes. Canadian men and women were thus denied the right to express their views on one of the most serious decisions ever to be made by the Parliament of Canada. While the Tories were spending millions of dollars in propaganda, my caucus and I were visiting and listening to Canadians everywhere in Canada to find out what they thought of this agreement. We fought for the interests of ordinary people during parliamentary committee sittings where this agreement was considered.

Madam Speaker, Quebecers, from farmers to textile workers in Montreal, want and have the right to demand a stable future. The Free Trade Agreement with the United States is a threat. Whenever we suggested changes, the Tories said no. The cultural and artistic communities in Canada have truly flourished, especially since World War II. Because of the all prevailing American influence, the Trade Agreement threatens this progress. Again, when we suggested changes to protect this positive development, the Tories said no.

We felt that the jobs of all the working women in the service industry, in all the cities, towns and villages from coast to coast were being jeopardized. Again when we proposed changes, the Tories said no.

Our grain producers who rank among the most competitive and productive in the world want to retain the existing powers of their Wheat Board. We agreed that this was important. Again the Tories said no.

All Maritimers want their regional development programs to be maintained. Likewise, Quebecers living in far away places, people living in the heartland of British Columbia as well as in the northern areas of the other provinces want to protect the capacity of the federal Government to support their regional economic development. When we moved amendments to this effect, again the Tories said no. This is totally unacceptable, Mr. Speaker!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, senior citizens want our health and social programs maintained and enhanced for future generations. The trade agreement jeopardize these programs, threatens to gut them as those in the United States. We have said: Yes, we must protect them. The Tories have said no. What the Conservatives do not understand when they say no to the requests made by women, artists, farmers, senior citizens, workers, simple requests relating to regional development and social programs, is that they are saying no to what Canada has become since the Second World War. Conservatives argue that they are steering us toward a better future. That is their argument. What they are really doing is in fact forcing us to conform to the concept of an American continent whose strength lies in the dollar, the almighty dollar, a concept that is illustrated by the United States, where 36 million people do not have any health insurance, where less than a quarter of the American people receive unemployment insurance benefits, where the rich get richer and the poor even poorer.