

*Supply*

I say "we" meaning Canadians, because Governments did not do it themselves. Governments provided the framework, the encouragement and the motivation for the private sector to get free from some of the shackles that existed before and get on with the job of creating opportunities in Canada. That is what brings about economic growth. It is a fundamental difference, I understand, between the Government and the opposition Parties on the other side of the House, but it has been proven time and time again in the last three years that the route we have taken works. This free trade agreement is a continuation and a reinforcement of those policies that have been so successful.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in—

[English]

**Mr. Langdon:** Mr. Speaker, I think if you would check the roster, you would see that it was the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) who spoke before the Minister, and I had assumed—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Yes, I noticed that, but there will still be time to recognize the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon), and I believe the Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre) will have the floor.

[Translation]

**Mr. Lapierre:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this important debate on Canada's future and to see that once again today the House of Commons is interested in the whole question of free trade. Earlier today I heard the Minister for International Trade say that the Opposition is seeking to go back to the situation of 20 years ago. To refresh her memory about our history I would point out to her that this debate on the possibility of forging closer links with the United States has been going on in Canada since 1878, ever since the reciprocity era. And, every generation or so, Canadians ask themselves this question. Historically, on each occasion since 1878, in 1891, in 1911, in 1947-48, each time, after considering the option to get closer to the United States, to become a new State, the Canadian people rejected it. On each occasion, the sense of being Canadians prevailed over the economic theory pursued by some people and in particular by the wealthy elements in our society.

We are now discussing that issue because of a Government initiative and, Mr. Speaker, it is very strange when you read again the statements made in June 1983 by the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney). He said about free trade:

● (1640)

[English]

It affects Canadian sovereignty and we will have none of it.

[Translation]

The same Prime Minister is now struggling to promote a trade agreement with the American administration which was signed in a rush, behind curtains, five minutes before midnight, which he signed on his knees; and Parliament, without any mandate from the population, is now debating a fundamental issue for our future as a country.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this debate is illegitimate since it doesn't have public support. It is not good enough for the Government to make such a commitment and to make such basic changes in our society without consulting the people who will be affected. During the last election campaign, none of the Conservative Members in this House has ever spoken about free trade. It was never on their agenda. And now, led by some interests of God knows where, they decided . . .

**Mrs. Bourgault:** The Canadians' interests—

**Mr. Lapierre:** If the Hon. Member opposite could wait her turn—they tried to give Canadians the short end of the stick.

Mr. Speaker, we will fight against that agreement to make sure it will never be implemented. We will make sure that a Government who has betrayed the confidence of the Canadian public—and this is what I call the tyranny of the majority—who is presently trying to push through a measure that will have tremendous consequences on our future as a country—

Mr. Speaker, we are told about the protectionist trends in the United States and this agreement has been presented to us as the answer to all our problems. However, if you look at the last statistics, we have a trade surplus with the United States and it is on the rise. At the present time, Canada has, each year, a trade surplus of almost \$20 billion. If you believe that the Americans sat at the negotiation table to maintain or increase that trade surplus, you must be dreaming.

I think that Government Members, who should take advantage of the positive trade balance of Canada, have opened the door to harmonizing our trade, which means dealing on an equal basis, and under such circumstances our trade surplus would not last very long.

Mr. Speaker, we saw how this agreement was negotiated. It was negotiated secretly and there was a series of denials and refutations. From time to time, the Government has leaked some information which often was contradictory. Mr. Speaker, Canadians have a right to be fully informed of what happened around that table. They have a right of access to the studies on the impact of free trade. Presently, the Government is trying to make us bite the bullet without putting all the facts on the table.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is acting cowardly and insiduously to keep the public in the dark in order to favor a few people. Look at the main proponents of this agreement. Have you seen small businessowners among them? Do they include ordinary people? Until now, only presidents of large multinationals have applauded this deal. No one else has done