

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Technology, whose mandate is to ensure the international competitiveness of Canadian industry and promote a high standard of business excellence.

Why such a mandate? Because we need to feel secure in Canada and because we must be assured of our role as a leading industrialized nation on the international market. More and more, we must turn to research and development and new technological applications, as well as maintain our traditional strengths in the areas of investment, management, human resources and marketing.

The Government, industry and the academic and research sectors will have to work more closely together, Mr. Speaker. The new Department of Industry, Science and Technology has begun work in three key areas which will form the very basis of all its activities and enable Canadian businesses to become more competitive on world markets.

They include the provision of aid to strategic technologies and to initiatives to improve the competitiveness of industry, and the provision of information and development services to businesses.

Strategic technologies are particularly important to the new Department because they affect a wide range of industries and businesses. In addition, the Department has set aside significant funds for the creation of alliances between businesses, business groups, research institutions and Canadian business groups and their foreign partners. Such alliances, Mr. Speaker, can help to plan and carry out precompetitive research and development work or develop state-of-the-art technological applications.

[*English*]

These initiatives already under way seek to put our industries on a competitive footing with our major trading partners. We in this country have the brains and resources to enable us to compete with anyone and everyone in the world. This Government is committed to putting into action the best of what we have in terms of technology to meet the challenges ahead. I can only tell you, Mr. Speaker, with the commitment of our Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), with the commitment of this Government, with the brains, the know-how, the willingness, the productivity of Canadians, and particularly with their hope for the future, we shall succeed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I feel privileged to have the opportunity to rise

in the House today and participate in my own small way in one of the most, if not the most, significant debates the country has faced this century. Bill C-2, the free trade Bill, will set the country on a different path which in the long run, I am afraid, will be detrimental to this great country.

I wish to make one point clear at the start. It is a point which has been made many times before, but because of the Conservatives, it must be made again. During the campaign and since, certain members of the Conservative Party have misled Canadians by stating that it is the only Party in favour of free trade. That is simply false. We in the New Democratic Party are not opposed to free trade. We believe in free trade as much as anyone else. Free trade is a motherhood issue, and we take no dispute with the concept of free trade. It was a conscious effort on the part of the Conservative Party to mislead Canadians to believe that if Canadians did not vote Conservative, trade with the United States would collapse.

In the Province of Saskatchewan, the Conservatives collaborated with Premier Devine, who indicated that if Canadians did not elect a Progressive Conservative majority government, the doors to trade with the United States would be slammed shut. They were very strong words. The Conservatives, including Premier Devine, were quick to accuse New Democrats of scare tactics. The rhetoric carried on by Mr. Devine, especially in his capacity as Premier of Saskatchewan, was not only unfortunate but outrageous, and a disgrace to the office he holds.

We heard more of the unfortunate rhetoric that has been taking place from the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). A few moments ago the Deputy Prime Minister indicated in the House that the Hon. Member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca (Mr. Barrett), the former Premier of British Columbia and now a member of the New Democratic caucus, had changed his views on free trade. The Deputy Prime Minister pointed to an agreement in 1973 whereby the four western Premiers had supported free trade.

The Hon. Member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has not changed his position on free trade. He is for free trade, as is every other member in the New Democratic caucus. We are not opposed to free trade. We are opposed to this Bill, the Prime Minister's trade Bill. In fact, if anyone has changed his or her opinion, it has been the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney). In the past he indicated that he was opposed to free trade. Every major cabinet Minister in the Government was opposed to free