

But protectionism is a blind alley - particularly for an open country like Canada. Avoiding competing forces today renders them lethal to-morrow. Condemning your country to small-scale production of goods that won't market elsewhere is no way to protect jobs and encourage innovations. Cutting yourself off from technology and investment won't help you move into the 21st century with a modern economy.

This debate is not about trade. This debate is about Canada, and whether we have the will to remain a strong and independent country in the modern world. The opponents say that a Trade Agreement will make us lose our will. They are saying that the country's entrepreneurs and institutions are not strong enough to withstand more open competition with American ones, even indirectly. They are saying that even where the Agreement exempts a sector or institution it will go under, because American pressures are just too strong. Their image of our society is a static one - preserving the supports and subsidies of past industrial policy as though they constitute our national identity.

Our national identity deserves better than that. The Free Trade Agreement was written for a country confident of what it is and what it can become. Instead of crutches it provides opportunities. It looks to the future rather than the past, and provides a process for managing it. It provides a good stepping stone to global negotiations on a wide range of issues. It tells our other trading partners that we can strike a tough but constructive bargain when the circumstances are right. It sets out a challenge to every region and sector of the country - a positive challenge to show what we are made of. For those Canadians with confidence in our institutions and lifestyle, the Agreement is not filled with demons and dragons - it is a competent compromise, a good bargain on which to build a future relationship with our best customer.