

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

refers to the regulation of agricultural standards, and the final two motions refer to the retransmission of TV signals.

I will use the first motion as an example to illustrate what this is about. The first motion requires that the appointment of chairmen of the procurement review board be approved by a Commons committee. The procurement review board will consider the fairness with which companies are being treated when they seek to get contracts with the Canadian Government or other levels of government in Canada. So this affects a very important area of the economy. What this Government is doing, and we want to make this clear to the people, is giving to Cabinet the privilege of appointing the chairman of this board. It is also giving Cabinet the privilege of making the regulations with respect to this board, that is, the powers, the duties and responsibilities of this board.

● (1220)

The same thing is being done with respect to the Canadian Import Tribunal and the other aspects I have already mentioned. What we have here is the introduction of a notion of cabinet legislation. This Commons is being asked to approve a piece of legislation so broad in its nature that it outlines legislative authority for Cabinet. Cabinet will determine just what are the powers, duties and functions of the procurement review board. In other words, when we set up a board that will determine whether or not the competition for contracts with the federal Government are being distributed fairly among Canadian and American companies, Cabinet will be able to outline the criteria and rules under which this will take place. Cabinet will also appoint the czar, the chief, the boss, who will determine whether or not this is being carried out in a fair way. What we have is a Government which is substituting cabinet rules for parliamentary democracy.

What the Government is saying is that it wants Cabinet to have the capacity to set the rules, to draft the regulations and it does not want to define legislation in such a precise manner that Parliament will know what the rules will be so that it has an opportunity to speak on these issues, and so that the representatives of the people will have an opportunity to be involved in debate. It does not want public opinion to affect the outcome of the debate. The Government wants to do all of this behind closed doors. That is what it is saying.

That is, of course, not surprising given what the Government has done until now. If we consider what the Government has said about a commitment to openness and democracy, we are shocked by these provisions. But if we measure these provisions against the Government's behaviour, particularly as it affects this trade deal, then, of course, we are not particularly surprised.

When the Government ran for office four years ago, it made no mention of a comprehensive free trade deal with the United States. When the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) ran for leadership of his Party, he said that such a deal would be destructive to Canadian society. The Government cooked up

the idea of a trade deal with the United States behind closed doors and if the truth be known, it was the Business Council on National Issues, the leaders of the major corporate enterprises of this country, that hatched this idea.

**Mr. Blackburn (Brant):** And the Chamber of Commerce.

**Mr. Keeper:** Along with the Chamber of Commerce, as my colleagues points out. They then took their pet project to the Government and behind closed doors said: "This is what we want. Do not pay any attention to public opinion. This is what we think is good for the country". That is what this set of regulations reflects. It reflects a closed and manipulative approach to Government. It reflects the idea that all Cabinet has to do is read public opinion polls in order to devise its regulations, strategies and policies behind closed doors and thus manipulate public opinion. That is what is distasteful about this aspect of the trade deal with which we are now dealing.

If the outcome was beneficial to Canadians, perhaps we could hold our noses and go along with it. However, if we examine the outcome of the trade negotiations, the deal that Canada is entering into with the United States under the leadership of the Prime Minister, we cannot in any way see it as beneficial.

I would like to read into the record some of the comments of people who have been excluded from this debate. The garment workers in my riding are some of the lowest paid workers in our country. These people live in the greatest of insecurity and their voices should be heard. The International Ladies Garment Workers' Union is one of the unions in that industry, and I would like to read its assessment of this trade deal with the United States. It indicates that this deal is going to lead to lower wages, lay-offs, to fewer benefits, to cut-backs in medical care, and to fewer health and social services. This is what will happen to garment workers because of free trade. That is why the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union says no to the free trade deal.

These workers, of course, know that the Liberal Party in this House and its Leader are opposing the free trade deal. I would like to read its assessment of the Liberal stand in this respect. The Union says: "It was the Liberals who opened our shoe market to more imports in 1981", which shows it is paying more attention to the behaviour of past Liberal Governments rather than to the words of the present Liberal Leader. The International Ladies Garment Workers' Union says that the trade agreement will be detrimental to the garment industry and to Canada. I am sure it would agree with me that it would be far better if this agreement had been negotiated in an open fashion rather than behind closed doors.

**Mr. McDermid:** It's all public information. Don't be silly.

**Mr. Keeper:** If the Conservatives believe in open Government, why do they want us to pass legislation that will give