

*The Budget—Right Hon. Mr. Turner*

**Mr. Garneau:** I wouldn't bet on that.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** Maybe that paper will not hit us until the fall. Quite frankly, I do not believe that the Government has any commitment to making real hard and tough choices, to make any changes which will make an impact on those who are wealthy enough and well-organized enough to resist the changes that will really result in tax reform in the country.

[Translation]

Yesterday, the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau) clearly explained our position on tax reform. The Government is always expecting us to come up with options and alternatives. Well, the option was crystal-clear in my hon. friend's speech, and we feel that his proposals should be included along with tax reform and the strengthening of our social programs. Any changes in the tax system must be firmly grounded in the principles of justice, equity and effectiveness. There are a number of tax breaks and tax expenditures that no longer do the work they were intended to do. In my view, if the system is fair, many of these tax breaks will no longer be necessary.

[English]

It is the same cynical ploy. On issue after issue the Minister hints strongly at tax reduction but at the same time he is considering a business transfer tax to hammer the Canadian consumer. The Minister should at least have the courage to tell us what is the plan. He should have the courage to tell us what his intentions are rather than hiding behind delays and studies. There is continued confusion, confusion and instability over the direction in which the Government wants to take the Canadian economy. We do not know where tax reform is, and of course there is added confusion, and the Minister did not deal with it at all, except in one line in his Budget, as to the status of the free trade negotiations with the United States.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** One line?

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** Perhaps in one paragraph.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** A pretty strong paragraph. Read it again.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** The Minister re-endorsed the free trade negotiations.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** With punch!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** I think it was the flabbiest punch that has been thrown since the latter days of Joe Walcott when he could hardly get into the ring.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** Where do you stand on this? Do you agree with the statement or not?

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** I will tell the Minister. I am glad I have him as a captive audience. I appreciate his courtesy in hearing us out.

The Prime Minister announced the free trade negotiations with the United States at the great Shamrock Summit. So far the only winner on March 17 has been St. Patrick—Canadians certainly have not gotten much out of these negotiations. The decision of the Prime Minister could dramatically alter almost every aspect of our economy in the next few decades. It could have a profound effect on the way we live, on the way we do business, on our standard of living, on our independence and certainly on our national sovereignty. Yet it received only a passing reference in the Minister's Budget—an endorsement.

The issue of free trade would not be discussed in the House of Commons at all if it were not for the opposition Parties. We once got 15 minutes from the Prime Minister. In fact, we have only had three speeches from the Prime Minister since this Parliament began in November of 1984. We had one on each Speech from the Throne and 15 minutes on free trade.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent), and I believe that the important debates of the country need the leadership of the Parties we have the honour to represent. We are here in the House of Commons despite an electronic age. This is the forum of the nation. This is where the Prime Minister ought to be.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** We in the Liberal Party have always favoured, and we still favour, liberalization of world trade and Canadian trade. We favour lowering trade barriers. We favour dissipating and lowering protection. We prefer to do it on a world-wide basis. Canadians have always done better in negotiations with the United States within the GATT negotiations and within multilateral trading partner negotiations. We have always done better with the United States that way than we have on a head-on approach with our American friends.

The United States is our largest and most important customer. That is agreed. The United States is not our only customer or trading partner. I will have to take the Minister through this very carefully and quietly so that he will understand.

**Mr. Dingwall:** You'd better repeat it a couple of times.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** I say that because he did not deal with the subject of the international scene in the depth he ought to have done in a major budget speech. As a matter of fact, that speech was so thin I have had gruel at one of these food banks that is thicker, and that is thin enough.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** You weren't in the House to listen to it.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** I was here.