

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

its keen, sophisticated, predatory, and economic sense in business tactics. The Government of the Northwest Territories gives northern suppliers and contractors a preference to encourage the development of business and to create a level playing field for northerners.

Will this be able to continue, I ask? Will northerners still be given an edge until they are truly in a position to be competitive? With the push for provincial jurisdictions to conform to the Free Trade Agreement, will this preference policy be viewed as a non-tariff barrier?

I would like to give an example of where new regional development initiatives are required in the North. Last year 2,000 trappers, most of whom were not full-time trappers, shipped \$5.6 million worth of raw furs outside the Northwest Territories. When the fur is sent out nothing more is added to the local economy.

We need to build a secondary industry around this traditional economy of hunting and trapping that will allow for the extensive training of personnel to process hides and to design, manufacture, market, and distribute products derived from local resources. This will create employment and boost the service industry. Given the time, resources, and opportunity, northern Canadians can achieve that goal and not let it fall into the hands of shrewd entrepreneurs to the south.

Northerners are also concerned about the indirect effects of the Free Trade Agreement on the environment. Environmental standards are higher in this country. Consequently, regulations are more stringent. Our clean environment is a result of an exacting environmental management regime. In the North we understand the fragility of our ecosystem. We know that we cannot build walls or shields against global pollution. However, we depend upon the strength of our Government and legislation for protection.

Our concerns come from the need to harmonize policy on both sides of the border to create the so-called level playing field. The Canadian Government will be pressured by Canadian industry to lower standards in order that it will be more competitive with American firms conducting the same business.

I ask, with jobs at stake, will Governments be able to resist lowering standards? Our environment is at risk. Need I appeal to and overstate the case for a clean environment to this slate of expert legislatures, this powerful force of Canadian protectors?

I think that the same can be said about our social programs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I would like to bring to the attention of the Hon. Member that she has another 10 minutes for her speech.

Ms. Blondin: Since the mid-1940s this country has built a social net that ensures that those who need help can get it. This is a service that is shrouded in controversy from time to time.

However, our Canadian democracy is one that stands by its mandate to care for and serve all people equally. Subjecting the existence of our social net to indirect pressures from outside forces is viewed very dimly by Canadians. A similar proposed move to deindex pensions also met with much public outcry and resistance.

At the very least, the social programs will be stretched and strained because of massive lay-offs, job losses, and dislocations. I do not for a moment believe that all those people will be retrained, relocated, or rehired. What exactly does the Government mean when it states that social programs will not be affected?

I look across the floor and I see the winners, the majority, the confident. I say to myself every day, as I look into their eyes and at their faces, surely they know what is best for the country. Do they believe, in their hearts and minds, that this is really what is best for Canada? Will this huge step taken now come back to haunt us in years to come? Will it be when we have no other recourse but to comply?

I ask, Mr. Speaker, do I see the world so differently that I cannot be convinced that this is good for all Canadians, not only for a few—the privileged, and established. Am I so beholden to my political philosophy of Liberalism that I am blinded, and that my mind is shut to another view or opinion? I say no.

I am a fair person. I am not a single focused visionary, nor am I backward. I, too, want a slice of the pie for myself and for my northern peoples. We do not want to sabotage success. Those are false accusations. Nor do we want to be unappreciative. That is also a false accusation. However, my innermost and strongest political intuition draws me back. I am not convinced.

Government Members have not been able to change my mind with a promise of great wealth and a secure future at the expense of our political independence as a nation. Nor do government Members have the jurisdiction over my mandate or integrity as an individual chosen to represent the northern peoples, many of whom fear this deal. It was the Government's duty to inform the public, to win the confidence of the public, and to