

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

proudly and boldly into the future. They wanted a government that was prepared to deal with change positively and constructively, that looked forward with confidence to the future and outward with self-assurance to the rest of the world.

I want to conclude my participation in this debate, which has now been going on for a few years, by reflecting on some statements which I consider to be important. The Free-Trade Agreement is an affirmation of a strong and sovereign Canada. The Government pledged to ensure that the continuing negotiations called for in the agreement will further contribute to making Canada a stronger and more confident and sovereign nation. Our two-track approach to trade policy puts Canada in a unique position to advance Canadian interests. Canadians are ready and enthusiastic to use the Agreement to renew and strengthen the Canadian economy.

Over the course of the election campaign, Canadians came to a momentous decision about the future of Canada.

[English]

Canadians thought long and hard about who they are and where they are going and, upon reflection, having considered it all, as Canadians do, they liked what they saw: a Canada aware of its identity, its potential, its role in the world; a Canada which has led the industrial countries in economic growth over the last four years; a Canada that has generated 1.3 million new jobs; a Canada which has provided brand new opportunities for our youth, and new trading opportunities for the future.

Canadians took a look at all of this, compared it with the alternative, and said: Yes, we want more of this for Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: We live next door to an energetic superpower. That is a fact of geography, and it is a fact about which we can do very little. Some people see it as a threat. We see it as an opportunity.

Canadians and Americans have lived in harmony for more than two centuries. We agree on many things. We pursue many of the same goals. We share a continent and we share a love of freedom. But we are profoundly different in many ways. Our affairs are organized and managed as a constitutional monarchy, while theirs is a republic.

• (1720)

We have a unique legal heritage of British common and French civil law. We are an officially bilingual country. We have embraced the multicultural reality of Canada. Although we are staunch allies of the United States in NATO and NORAD, we do not always view the world in the same way. In fact, we have very many important differences of policy and substance which we have expressed time and time again in fora around the world.

However, we do not believe in stridency as a substitute for policy in the conduct of our relationship with the United States of America. Nor do we see isolation as a prerequisite to sovereignty. Relations with the United States of America today are sound. Ours is a policy of building up and not tearing up. Ours is a policy of co-operating across the table and not shouting across the table.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: When neighbours quarrel, everyone suffers. When neighbours co-operate, everyone benefits. We prefer the politics of co-operation to that of confrontation. I think we are proving it works in Canada's interests.

Canada is a trading nation. Nearly one-third of all our economic activity is generated by trade, and three million Canadian jobs depend directly upon trade. Trade is one of the largest challenges facing this Government, this Parliament, and I suspect it will remain the largest challenge that will face Governments for some time to come. The world is shrinking. Nations are becoming increasingly interdependent. The internationalization of business is intensifying. We have to come to grips with these rapidly changing facts of modern international economic life. They cannot be ignored.

One way that Governments can help is to make life less uncertain through international co-operation and agreements that substitute rules for power politics, to try to bring some order out of chaos.

Canadians have long been champions of international co-operation, whether multilateral or bilateral. Few countries have Canada's institutional reach around the world, in the United Nations, in the Commonwealth, in the "sommet de la francophonie," the Economic Group and other fora of economic co-operation such as GATT, the OECD, the IMF and the World Bank.