

THE SECOND MYTH OR MISCONCEPTION PERMEATING THE DEBATE HERE IS THAT THE CHOICE FACING CANADIANS IS BETWEEN A FAMILIAR AND RELATIVELY COMFORTABLE STATUS QUO AND THE UNKNOWN OF FREE TRADE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: THERE IS NO STATUS QUO. THE WORLD AS ALWAYS IS ON THE MOVE. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT THE WORLD IS MOVING FAR, FAR FASTER NOW THAN EVER BEFORE. SO IT IS AN ILLUSION TO TALK ABOUT THE STATUS QUO. THE STATUS QUO IS A SLIPPERY SLOPE. THE STATUS QUO IS A TIGHTENING ROPE.

THERE ARE TWO ASPECTS OF THIS CHANGING WORLD THAT ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT TO THE FREE TRADE DEBATE. THE FIRST, TO WHICH, I HAVE ALREADY ALLUDED IS THE MOVE TOWARD EVEN GREATER PROTECTIONISM IN THE UNITED STATES. THE CURRENT OMNIBUS TRADE BILLS NOW BEFORE THE CONGRESS WOULD SUBSTANTIALLY RAISE PROTECTIONIST BARRIERS AGAINST CANADIAN AND FOREIGN PRODUCERS. I CANNOT PREDICT THE PRECISE TIME THAT A TRADE BILL WILL PASS OR TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT WILL BE IN IT, BUT I REGARD IT AS MORE LIKELY THAN NOT THAT AN OMNIBUS TRADE BILL WHICH WILL SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE CURRENT LEVELS OF PROTECTION IN MANY AREAS OF CRITICAL INTEREST TO CANADA WILL BE PASSED WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS.