

*Extension of Sitings*

We have heard a great deal about the free trade legislation in the context of this procedural motion. We will probably hear more about it.

I have some difficulty understanding why we cannot get right to the free trade debate. Why do we have to go through this particular motion? Members on our side of the House have said the people have decided. The debate on this matter during the election campaign should have been sufficient. We know what we are here for, let us get on with the debate. We have heard indications that the Opposition would like to make some amendments. Certainly, let us hear what the amendments are and let us debate them.

● (2250)

There has been some suggestion that moving the legislation into Committee of the Whole would somehow be usurping the rights of Members of Parliament. It seems to me that the matter of free trade has been debated throughout this entire election campaign. We hear that the legislation should go to a smaller committee and that there should be experts look at it and give evidence. I would submit that experts have looked at this agreement. We have debated it through the election campaign. It was debated in the House prior to the election campaign. I would submit that there is enough information on which to go.

We should get to the Committee of the Whole and have every Member of the House consider the legislation. To me that seems logical. Obviously it is something that is important to everyone. We all have our opinions. We have all done a great deal of research on it. I do not think that expert evidence will add anything to that.

We want to get into a Committee of the Whole discussion. Obviously everyone has an opinion on this particular matter. If we put it to a committee of seven members who would report back, we would still have all these Members of the House wanting to speak on the matter. I have difficulty understanding why we cannot get to that point. The amendment that has been moved seems to be a reasonable one, in line with trying to get us to the point where we can debate the Free Trade Agreement. I would think that we should get to that point and get to it as soon as we can.

The thing that amazed me about the election campaign was that we did not actually discuss what was in this particular agreement, a commercial agreement. My understanding is that a commercial agreement speaks for itself. There is nothing else in that agreement, but all

these extraneous issues came in during the election campaign.

We heard talk about losing social programs and the like. Social programs were not mentioned in the Free Trade Agreement. We found out subsequently that an international trade case has said that any universally available social program cannot be considered a subsidy. Only a leap of logic must be taken to possibly say that any of those universally available social programs could be considered a subsidy. We found out during the election campaign that that cannot be done.

We spoke about the environment during the election campaign. There is nothing in the Free Trade Agreement about the environment. We spoke about sovereignty during the election campaign. There is nothing in the Free Trade Agreement about sovereignty. We spent so much time on matters that are not even mentioned in the Free Trade Agreement that we did not get down to a discussion of the actual agreement.

Now the Opposition decides that it is time to get down to discussing the agreement. Why did we not discuss it during the election campaign? Why did we have to wait until this point in time? We should have discussed it during the election campaign, and a great disservice was done to the Canadian public by not discussing the agreement itself.

As I indicated, my community has benefited from a form of free trade. The Auto Pact has been a great benefit to our community and we have prospered. We would like to share that prosperity with the rest of Canada.

There are other sectors in the community that would also like to share in that prosperity. One that is not so noticeable is the greenhouse and cut flowers industry. It is important to this industry to have a market in the United States, and in fact, it does now, but there is a tariff on flowers. There are even rumours that the Americans would countervail against the cut flower industry. The industry does not say too much, but it is rapidly becoming the second largest industry in our area after the automobile industry. It wants secure access to the American market and it wants it quickly.

As I previously indicated, we should get to the matter of the Free Trade Agreement. We should not be going through all this. We can say more on the Free Trade Agreement during debate on the Bill, and I certainly hope that we can get past this procedural motion and get to the Free Trade Agreement itself.