

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

has invited representatives from the forest industry to meet with him to discuss the Memorandum of Understanding. This afternoon I was in touch with some representatives of the forest industry in our province and I urged them to take the Minister up on his offer for a meeting, a meeting that we hope will happen as soon as possible. Perhaps, with some luck, we will get some sense out of the Government.

• (0030)

What we need is nothing less than an opportunity as parliamentarians to review how these negotiations are undertaken. We need a full and complete committee reporting independently to the House. We need a trade monitor similar to the Auditor General who can report independently the activities of the negotiations that are taking place. The committee should have the power to travel, to hear witnesses and to take evidence under oath. In the true sense of democracy, give us the opportunity to review the negotiations openly, not behind the closed doors of government.

I do not see why Hon. Members opposite cannot give us a chance to see what is going on. They will have a chance to have their witnesses appear as well. If we do not have this committee, I am afraid that we will see another backroom deal. The Tories will cut out the programs that will cut the guts out of Canada. That is what I and other Hon. Members of my Party fear will happen if we leave the negotiations to Hon. Members opposite and to them alone.

There are many other areas of concern about the trade deal, the environment, social programs and water policy to mention a few. I call on the Government to support the motion put on the Order Paper by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon). If the Government has the courage of its convictions, I know it will support our efforts to represent the interests of our constituents.

In closing, I would like to thank the voters of Prince George—Bulkley Valley for the trust they have put in me as their Member of Parliament. I will continue to work, and I started to do so some time ago. I look forward to the next few years as being an exciting and productive time for my riding and for my constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The question is as follows—

Some Hon. Members: Debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I recognize the Hon. Member for Essex—Kent.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent): Mr. Speaker, this being my first speech in the House, I would like to thank my constituents for the faith they have shown in me.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. I would like to bring to the attention of Hon. Members that there should be a little civility when the Hon. Member is making his maiden speech. Maybe we can get it over with in a hurry. I recognize the Hon. Member for Essex—Kent (Mr. Pickard).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pickard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I very much appreciate that. I would again like to thank very much my constituents. I promise I shall work to the best of my ability to represent them and their interests and concerns.

My riding is Essex—Kent. It is a small riding located in the most southerly portion of Canada in southwestern Ontario. I believe that my riding is the most diverse agricultural riding in Canada. We produce a very wide variety of agricultural products including multi-million dollar greenhouse industries, grapes, wine production, soft fruit industry, horticultural products, dairy products, eggs and soybeans, to name just a few.

My riding also has a wide variety of food processors located in it, Heinz being one. There are several other food processors there that will be affected by the trade deal and its impact on agriculture. As well, some concerns have been brought forward by the manufacturing industry in my riding. Plant closures may be the result in the manufacturing industries which are closely related to the auto industry.

I have great concern for the people of Essex County with regard to the negative impact this deal will have on them. This is a difficult deal for them to face. As a matter of fact, it is a deal from a stacked deck.

The Macdonald Commission suggested that agriculture would be best left out of this agreement. The Government decided not to follow that advice, though it