

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

average. More has to be done in my area particularly to ensure that seniors are looked after.

In talking to seniors and going through facilities throughout the past couple of years, I find that there is a definite lack of geriatric research. There are problems for seniors because there are not ample facilities for those seniors. If the facilities are present, there are other factors that they find difficult. Transportation in the area is difficult in small areas, and that is something that we as Members of this House have to deal with.

Seniors are also frightened by the unexpected and the unknown. In this particular case, the unknown that frightens seniors is the particular Bill that is before the House now. Seniors do not know and cannot receive an assurance from the Government that social programs are not part of the deal.

Mr. Crosbie: They have had the assurance a thousand times.

Mr. Whittaker: Besides the assurance they need more than loud words from the Minister for International Trade from St. John's. They need something in writing, an amendment. The very fact that social programs have not been put in that agreement leaves the matter open to interpretation.

Mr. McDermid: Name the article, name the chapter that it is under.

Mr. Whittaker: That is exactly what I am saying, Sir. If you read it, you would know—

Mr. McDermid: I've read it more times than you ever have.

Mr. Whittaker: —that in fact they were not in the agreement, and should have been put in the agreement. The Minister has admitted that there were certain things that could not be dealt with in that agreement such as subsidies. They should have been dealt with by the Minister. They should have been dealt with by our negotiator. It is unacceptable that they are not and have not been in that agreement.

Our seniors deserve better than that in their golden years. They deserve the assurance. They should have that assurance, not only from the Minister, but from both sides in this deal, both Canada and the United States, that their futures will be looked after; that they do not have to worry about medicare or their social programs. It is unacceptable that those have not been put in the agreement.

In the preamble to Bill C-2 it states that the Free Trade Agreement is:

to promote productivity, employment, financial stability and the improvement of living standards,

to establish a climate of greater predictability for Canadians to plan and invest with confidence and to compete more effectively in the United States and global markets,

I would like to give an example of the type of confidence that we have in the Government. In my area there was a small utility company called West Kootenay Power and Light. In that area we were very proud of that small utility. It provided power to some five regional districts. In those regional districts Canadians at least had control of that utility. Two years ago, after the dismantling of the Foreign Investment Review Agency by the Government, over the objections of my constituents, the Government sold West Kootenay Power and Light to Utilicorp of the United States. That company could not even purchase another utility in many of the states of the United States, but we in Canada sold that utility to the United States. We have been assured by the Members that, if we do not want to sell anything, we don't have to sell it.

• (2250)

That was a case, Mr. Chairman, where we did not want to sell West Kootenay Power and Light. Where is it? It is in the hands of the Americans. At the present time, the same Americans are in the Okanagan trying to push through a gas and oil turbine plant, a plant which would threaten the environment in that area, an environment to which this Government has paid only lip service. We in the New Democratic Party are going to fight for a safe environment for future generations.

That, I submit to you, Mr. Chairman, is only the start of what is to come under this Free Trade Agreement—the sale of our utilities, the sale of our future. We are having a sale on our resources.

In my region of the country, the wine industry and the soft fruit industry are now down the tube. That is not something that is going to happen in the future. It is something that is happening now, in anticipation of the Free Trade Agreement coming into force and effect. I have friends and acquaintances who are pulling up their soft fruit trees—their peach trees, their cherry trees. This is all in anticipation of the coming into force of the Free Trade Agreement.

Our fruit growers need more than lip service from this Government. What they need is the assurance that they will be able to compete effectively. They do not want to