

force firms to upgrade equipment and improve productivity and this will bring about increased exports to other countries.

Mr. Speaker, we never hear the Opposition mention the benefits which the Free Trade Agreement holds in store for consumers. The truth is that the cost of tariffs is borne by the consumer, just as the cost of any other indirect tax. With the elimination of tariffs and with increased market access, the Canadian consumer will be paying less for a wider variety of products.

During the election campaign, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition has rallied around the threat of curtailment or loss of social services in Canada. It will be noted that having practically flogged to death the issue, they have considerably toned down their attempts to intimidate the Canadian public this week and last in the House, and the reason is, Mr. Speaker, that the Free Trade Agreement will in fact ensure enhanced social services for Canadians in the future. In the past, like in the period after the war, collective enrichment was translated into a more equitable distribution of wealth in social services, unemployment insurance, health insurance and car insurance.

Before redistributing wealth, we must create it. And the best way to be able to afford our social services is not to increase personal income tax as advocated in the electoral platform of the Socialist Opposition.

The search for incentives to stimulate the economy, such as access to the American market, will generate additional resources to pay for our social programs, even with our rapidly aging population.

[English]

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, our great nation on the eve of the twenty-first century can only benefit from the Free Trade Agreement.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, the people of Ottawa West have entrusted me with an important mission, to speak out on their behalf, to bring their views to this Parliament, and to the governing of this society. It is a trust I do not want to betray no matter how late the hour or how enticing the prospect of a Christmas holiday. It is a trust I do not limit just to those who voted for me but to those who voted for someone else. It is a trust I hold on behalf of all my constituents, and it is a trust we all bring to this House.

We talk about participatory democracy and consulting the people. This election has had to be the granddaddy of all consultations.

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

[Translation]

I suppose that all my colleagues here spent 50 days and more, as I did, going door to door and personally meeting millions of people in their ridings.

[English]

Perhaps never before did a Parliament have such an opportunity to debate a major issue of public policy in full awareness of the views, the aspirations, and the hopes of all Canadians. It is a chance I think we have blown.

[Translation]

In our democratic system, the big question is to what extent we will be able to incorporate in the Free Trade Act everything we learned and heard so that the Agreement can be more acceptable to a greater number of Canadians.

[English]

The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) talked about reconciliation. He talked about healing the nation. We had the opportunity here in the last 11 days to draw on every shred of wisdom everyone of us in this House has gained to make the best possible deal we could, and we did not do it. We had the opportunity to implement those values that unite us as Canadians, not those that divide us.

The Government has chosen not to take that path of reconciliation but to block by every means at its disposal amendments that would have satisfied and eased the concerns of millions of Canadians. The Government has chosen instead to stifle the expression of those views by limiting debate through every procedural means at its disposal, to cut off the 120 new Members who were elected to this House and who have never had the chance to speak on behalf of their constituents before.

It is not enough for a Government to say "we won the majority of seats" or for others to say "we won the majority of the popular vote".

There was, as I heard it, no impenetrable wall that separated those that voted for the Government on this issue and those that voted against. On either side of the argument there were deep concerns about this deal and what it means for the future of our country. Those who voted for the Government, and presumably for the trade deal, and those who voted against it, with few exceptions, both want to see our network of social programs maintained.