

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

November 21st to enter into a Free Trade Agreement with our most important trading partner, the United States of America.

This is in order to gain access to a market that compares to the European market or the Asian market. It is in order to gain secure access to that market that is so important, and also to gain the ability to solve our differences on a bilateral basis, on a final basis, so as to minimize the negative impact of disputes that can arise in day-to-day trade.

Mr. Speaker, naturally the free trade deal applies to the big companies. But the provisions of the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States also apply to the small businesses, and, I should add, to the very small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, growth for all these businesses is what the Canadian Government, along with the people of Canada, wants to ensure by signing this historical free trade deal with the United States. We also want, Mr. Speaker, to ensure our future, and the future of our children, within a constantly changing global economic environment.

Today, I would particularly like to address four major issues. I shall speak first about industrial development, second about regional development, third about the impact of the free trade deal on the development of the science and technology industries, and finally about the adjustment process, an issue the Opposition has raised several times.

Let me start by responding to some of the comments heard from the Opposition. They have claimed that the Free Trade Agreement meant the sellout of the Canadian economy, that the Americans could, at any given time, buy any company they wanted and americanize it. Mr. Speaker, people realize that during the past century Canada has been blessed with economic growth precisely because a lot of men and women from abroad came to invest in a country with a promising and challenging future, a country with opportunities to create jobs and wealth, in short a country which had a lot more to offer than they could ever hope to find in their countries of origin.

The free trade deal does not change anything to that fact. It will certainly make it easier to attract the capital investment we need to create jobs in the immediate future, as we have been doing over the past four years.

But more particularly we realize that these investments from abroad contribute to our own expansion.

They come not only from the United States but also from many other countries which will follow in our footsteps towards freer trade.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, some people say that is all very nice, but by doing that we are selling off our sovereignty, we are selling off our economy, we are selling off our very identity. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that history indicates that this kind of investment does not threaten anything we have in Canada. Canada's trade practices, Canada's standards and Canada's criteria will be fully respected as our country continues to face up to the economic challenge of the coming century. The quality of life and the working conditions of the Canadian industrial labour force is not threatened, and the very survival of Canada's industrial sector is no longer in doubt.

In terms of investment, Mr. Speaker, that is what the free trade deal means. The deal tells our American colleagues that they are welcome to share in Canada's economic development and economic future as long as they are prepared to abide by our laws and respect our standards.

Now a few words about industrial development.

• (1630)

[*English*]

The Free Trade Agreement with the United States will benefit small businesses as well as big businesses in this country. As for the 1986 census, over 4 million Canadians were employed in businesses employing fewer than 100 persons. This represented approximately 41 per cent of total private sector employment in Canada. As we all know, it has been the small business sector which has shown the greatest rate of job creation over the past few years.

In a recent Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey released in September, 1988, which sought to elicit the opinions of small businesses on the impact of the FTA, a full 40 per cent of the survey respondents expect the impact to be beneficial to their businesses. Only 7 per cent of member firms indicated they might be adversely affected by the FTA. I believe that speaks eloquently for the projection that the small business community in this country and, as I mentioned earlier on, the small, small business community in this country, will benefit from the Free Trade Agreement.

We now turn to regional development. We have heard a lot of stories about regional development over the last few months on the campaign trail and even before.