

Supply

I would like to again remind the House that this government has an important mandate to fulfil. We are doing that through many departments but today I wanted to concentrate on some facts about what the Department of Industry, Science, and Technology is doing.

I am also talking a little bit about employment and immigration, as we talk about the learning side. We are talking about the many things this department is doing to put our country into an even better economic situation and that is what Canadians are looking for. That is what this government is doing and will continue to do as we carry on with this mandate that Canadians have given the Conservative government twice in a row.

When the day comes when we have an election, undoubtedly they will reflect upon what has been done for the poor, for Canadians, through putting the building blocks together for a dynamic united and highly successful country. It is one of the greatest countries to live in. They will reflect upon what we have done.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the member from Sarnia—Lambton. He alluded to the free trade agreement quite a bit during his speech and he knows, I know and every Canadian knows that the present FTA is not working to the advantage of the Canadian public in general.

He knows, I know and every Canadian knows that 400,000 people have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector alone since 1989 when this FTA was put into place. I put this to him very bluntly, because he did not address the motion before the House and since there are negotiations going on concerning Mexico, the United States, and Canada—the NAFTA agreement.

Since the last agreement was passed without a doubt to the detriment of Canadians, I must admit and I tell him right now that there was a consultation. The 1988 election was held mostly on that subject, the free trade agreement. Would he not agree today that before we expand on it, before we go any further into enlarging that FTA to the NAFTA agreement, Canadians should be consulted and it would be the appropriate thing to do for any democratic government to call an election now before it signs this NAFTA agreement?

Mr. James: My colleague has a sincere interest in the free trade agreement. I am sure when discussions are going on within his party he has to follow along as to which side he is going to fall on.

He said that 400,000 jobs have been lost through the free trade agreement. I do not know whether he could list them all for Canadians and document how they were lost due to a free trade agreement.

Certainly when the free trade agreement was entered into, the government said there would undoubtedly be some dislocation. Certainly some adjustment will go on. He did know that. When you put our companies into a more competitive situation, a countdown is done. Maybe 10 years will not be quite enough. In the case of the major industry in my area, five years is too long. Our industry wants the countdown to be even faster. They do not want to wait five years. They can compete. They wanted the tariffs lowered so they could get into the American market.

• (1730)

As I mentioned earlier, we are not disputing that we are in a global, lowered barriered economy where we have to compete. Canadians want lower consumer spending.

We are getting into the NAFTA. We are talking and it seems to be very open. Writers are writing about it every day. We are getting into a negotiated situation. I do not know whether the Liberal Party does its negotiating in front of the public all the while. It does not appear like it.

In a negotiated situation like this, certainly there are a lot of negotiations that must be done by bureaucrats. The hon. member opposite is afforded the opportunity any time he wants to be briefed on the situation. It will become more and more public as we carry on if an agreement is reached. There is a point in time when an agreement is reached and one is going to receive an awful lot of information.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, it still amazes me to hear a government member who actually believes in the rhetoric. Without feeling embarrassed or without any blush on his face, he stands up in this House and says what a great economic record this government has. He is one of the few government members who actually believes it or seems to believe it.