

than in the North. To the South, we have the Americans, our neighbours. Through the decades, Canadians and Americans have done business together. We work at that. We buy and we sell. We have learned to work together. They have become our friends. Eighty per cent of all our exports are headed to the United States. That accounts for 2,500,000 jobs which depend directly on our sales to the United States. That's enormous! We absolutely had to make a choice and we decided to reach this trade agreement with the United States precisely to protect those jobs instead of simply saying that we were going to create jobs.

But 250 economists in Canada came out in favour of free trade because they say it will create jobs. I say that what was even more important in all this was the fact that the Americans had decided to use protectionist measures which might have resulted in at least 2 million Canadians losing their jobs. Can you imagine such a situation with a country like Canada, with 25 million people and some \$300 billion in accumulated debts. If unemployment continues to increase, if corporations do not make benefits, where will we end up? We will end up broke. So it was really important for Canada to sign this agreement with the United States to continue to develop and grow.

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Some businesses in Longueuil, Montreal, and elsewhere in Quebec and Canada export between 20 per cent and 60 per cent of their production to the United States. If the Americans had continued to implement their protectionist measures, these businesses could have lost between 20 and 60 per cent of their market. They would have lost all their machinery. Their only choice would have been to move to the United States. If we want to keep these businesses here, we must make it possible for them to grow, and that is what we are doing with the Free Trade Agreement.

Over the past ten years, we have witnessed a fairly remarkable technological evolution. As you know, there have been changes: even in our own offices, computers have replaced secretaries. That is a dramatic example. We have replaced our secretaries with computers. Unfortunately, we did not make these computers. Why? Because we are not assured of a major secure market which would justify the necessary research and development for these highly sophisticated machines. If we want to develop high technology to replace the jobs we have lost, we need a market which is large enough to justify

the investments in research and development. That is why the Free Trade Agreement with the United States is really essential and necessary for Canada. We had the possibility of accepting or not accepting free trade. We also had the choice of progressing or dying. It is because we decided to progress that Canadians provided us with this mandate.

Concerning social welfare, I have never heard so many lies as during this election campaign. We were told that social welfare would be affected. We have been doing business with the United States at a fairly accelerated pace for at least 100 years—80 per cent of all our exports are sold to that country—and we have done it while maintaining our social programs. There has been no change. We will continue to grow with the United States and we will also have a long-term guarantee that we can continue working with that nation and keep our social programs.

I heard Mrs. Bégin, the former federal Liberal Minister, say that free trade would force us to sell our hospitals. It is nothing but lies. None of the clauses in the Free Trade Accord says that we have to sell our hospitals. There will be no changes of any kind before or after implementation. We have always been free to sell our hospitals if we wanted to. But nothing in free trade deal forces us to sell our hospitals. Besides, most hospitals belong to the provinces who can choose to do what they want with them.

You know, there were all kinds of rumours during the election campaign. Some even said at one point, I think it came from the Liberal Party, that free trade would lead to an increase in AIDS.

An Hon. Member: Mrs. Bégin said so.

Mr. Leblanc: I think she is the one who said that. I do not know whether she was talking about free love or free trade, but no matter, she was talking about AIDS. So those bold remarks of Mrs. Bégin give some idea of what we are seeing here, the type and mentality of this Liberal Party, and that is continuing. That is the way Mrs. Bégin spoke and that is what we are still hearing today.

They scared the elderly. That is vile, that is base, that is unacceptable. Most of these people have nothing more than their old age pensions to live on, yet our opponents went as far as telling them they might lose their pensions. Well that is . . . I would rather not say it. It makes me sad, just how low can you get.