

regularly. Ontarians will surely want Quebecers to continue to buy products in Toronto. I am sure of it.

In Ontario, over 100,000 jobs are dependent on sales in Quebec. I doubt that Ontarians will refuse to sell to Quebec any more if 100,000 jobs are at stake. I doubt that westerners will refuse to sell their beef to Quebec when we buy \$800 or \$900 million of it each year.

Therefore, those who claim that there will be no economic union with Quebec are talking nonsense. Anyone who is the least realistic will understand that this is a bare fact, that we are not inventing anything and that it will evolve quite naturally.

What we are saying is that we are determined enough to do it. If Liberals, and especially those from Quebec, maintain that they do not want that, it just baffles me.

[English]

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to engage in this debate, particularly after having listened to that rather enlightening rendition of creative imagination on the part of the Bloc Quebecois members. I am happy to know that Jules Verne is alive and well and writing science fiction when we hear their description of how everything can change while everything remains the same. It does challenge the imagination.

• (1715)

I want to speak for a few moments about the allegations contained in the motion on the floor today with respect to Bill C-88. That is the bill to implement the internal trade agreement which was negotiated and signed among the federal government and the provinces about a year ago today. I must say that the allegations contained in that motion represent an inability or perhaps an unwillingness on the part of the Bloc Quebecois to understand the plain meaning of the text in the bill.

[Translation]

As was said in the House before, the federal government would seldom intervene as plaintiff in a dispute that arises within the context of the Agreement on Internal Trade. If a dispute is settled in the federal government's favour and the province concerned refuses to accept the conclusions of an impartial panel, the federal government could then suspend benefits or impose retaliatory measures of equivalent effect.

Clearly, such measures would be imposed in the same sector as the initial violation or in another sector regulated by the agreement. Retaliatory measures would not affect transfer payments or social programs since these do not come under the purview of this agreement.

[English]

Bill C-88 does not make the federal government the policeman of the internal trade agreement as the official opposition

Supply

mistakenly insists. Anyone who takes the time to read the bill, even the headnote to clause 9 of Bill C-88 or to read article 1710 of the agreement on internal trade can only verify the accuracy of what I have just outlined. Bill C-88 deals only with what the federal government must do to live up to its obligations under the internal trade agreement and nothing else.

As I said in the House on May 4, the agreement on internal trade is a consensual agreement. All the parties who agreed to it must act within their own jurisdiction to implement it and comply with its obligations.

[Translation]

So far, only the federal government and the Government of Alberta have tabled legislation to implement the agreement and comply with their respective obligations in this regard. It is probable that most of the other parties to the agreement will decide to do likewise, sooner or later.

I am sure that all Canadians are anxious to see what governments that claim to support domestic free trade will actually do to implement the Agreement on Internal Trade and eliminate the barriers they themselves created over the years.

Bill C-88 is an historic milestone. It is an opportunity for the federal government to show leadership and to do so with the governments of the other parties to the agreement, as they implement the first comprehensive domestic free trade agreement since the British North America Act, 1867.

[English]

Since 1867 the Canadian economy has grown and evolved in ways never imagined by the Fathers of Confederation. The federal government still has the constitutional responsibility for trade and commerce. Over time, provinces have assumed prominent roles as influencers of economic growth and in the regulation of trade and commerce at their level.

As a result, trading arrangements and regulations have developed in an ad hoc way often in response to a particular regional need. Many of these measures create barriers to trade as they impact on the free flow of goods, services, people and capital within Canada.

Such barriers can lead to the inefficient use of resources and limit the ability of industry to take advantage of economies of scale and to maintain competitive market positions. The result is to reduce the competitiveness of Canadian business and adversely affect the Canadian economy.

• (1720)

Also, in Canada we have a patchwork of regulations, standards and other barriers to interprovincial trade that have grown around us and have become an unacceptable feature of our domestic market. There has been growing concern and evidence these barriers to trade are seriously affecting our ability to remain competitive in the international trading environment.