

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

Bourassa, who was once contemptuously called a "hot-dog eater".

In 1988, once again and this time more loudly, Quebec said yes to the Progressive Conservative Party and to Mr. Mulroney because Quebec is not arrogant and because it recognized our party's sincerity, simplicity and sense of values.

Today the people of Quebec have confidence in their ability to compete culturally and economically with the best in the world.

The wrenching doubts of our anglophone compatriots are due to the fact that they have steadfastly rejected all liberalization of the ties which link us to our mighty neighbour to the south. On three occasions in the past 100 years, Canadians were consulted on the possibility of free trade with the United States of America. And twice, in 1891 and in 1911, they rejected such a proposal. No truck or trade with the *Yankees*, as they used to say!

On those occasions, Quebec expressed its agreement with the rest of the country and defeated one of its greatest Prime Ministers, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Note that since 1911, no federal political party or leader has had the courage or ambition to return to the question of free trade between the two countries. And for a good reason. However, Mr. Speaker, on September 26, 1985, the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, rose in this House to make the following announcement: Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform the House (and the country) that I have today spoken to the President of the United States to express Canada's interests in pursuing a new trade agreement between our two countries. We seek to negotiate the broadest possible package of mutually beneficial reductions in tariff and non-tariff barriers between our two countries.

Two years later, after difficult negotiations between the representatives of our two countries, a free trade agreement liberalizing the sectors that were not yet subject to a treaty was presented in this House. All of Canada then had a trade treaty that sheltered our leading industrial sectors from American protectionism and gave us wider access to the market considered to be the world's most important. With such an accord, it became possible to steer and guide discussions between the two countries and to limit unilateral actions that are harmful to our industries.

• (2130)

[English]

What the people on this side of the House spelled for Canada was a map of our future commercial relations with our neighbours to the south. In terms of Canadian nationalism, this treaty has been arrived at because of the political will of our Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to forge ahead and build an even stronger nation.

The response of Canadians has been termed an act of faith. It is more than that. I see the results of the November 21 election as a reaction to common sense and of common sense. As a nation we cannot withdraw from international trade. We depend on it in a large measure and continue to do so in an increasingly competitive world.

Those who work against the Free Trade Agreement seem to have failed to read the consensus among Canadians. Their fears were immediately related to their own sectoral or personal concerns.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the opponents of free trade as it is expressed in this historic agreement have tried everything to spread fear and to trouble our fellow citizens. We witnessed what was really like a hostage-taking when we heard that the most vulnerable citizens were threatened with losing their pensions, their unemployment insurance or their medicare.

What low-mindedness, what panic they showed by such actions, Mr. Speaker. It does not take much to see in such speeches repeated *ad nauseam* during the election campaign contempt for the voters' intelligence. We saw a determined, often dishonest attempt to shake the nation's self-confidence.

In this House are many Opposition Members who even today raise the spectre of our country being absorbed politically, of the progressive dismantling of our social programs, and what else besides! If they have not yet understood or accepted the Canadian people's verdict, let them at least, Mr. Speaker, refrain from subjecting us to their senseless idle talk and nonsense! They tried to make the Government take the blame for their lack of programs and alternatives. It did not work.

Their hysterical scare tactics have not passed the test of reality and they are now starting all over again as if Canadians, who have the last word, had not realized what they were up to. I have no intention, Mr. Speaker, to deprive the Hon. Members of the right to express their opinion. However, I wish they would stick to