

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

as independent. You do not have as many opportunities, and you are more reliant upon security and the social security which this country provides. To perpetrate those kinds of falsehoods to the people of this country was shameful.

We know members of the Opposition have paid for it. They lost the election. Canadians finally realized the Opposition was wrong, and they were being sold a bill of goods which was a bill of dishonesties. I want to say once again to the elderly people in my constituency and in constituencies across the nation that the Free Trade Agreement does not affect pensions. It does not affect medicare or future security. Instead, it creates a new prosperity which will ensure that this Government and future Governments can afford those programs, that we can afford to improve them and have our security assured in the future.

Then we heard about water. I was always hearing about how the United States was going to drain us dry. During the election campaign in British Columbia it rained non-stop. There were days when I felt like saying "Come and take the water, we don't want it any more". But as I was out at the bus stops in the mornings with my umbrella, I told my people that the Americans were not going to take our water. I have a few companies that are selling drinking water and that is fine. But to perpetrate falsehoods and myths that the Free Trade Agreement would result in the raping of our resources, our water and energy, was totally improper, incorrect, and we all know that the opposition Parties will pay for that for years to come.

What does the Free Trade Agreement finally come down to for all of us?

**Mr. Foster:** It is a sell-out.

**Mrs. Collins:** No, it is not a sell-out. It is about opportunities and confidence. That is what is so exciting, after so many years of rejection. During the campaign, I had an elderly gentleman who had been through the 1911 election come into my office and say "It is like *déjà vu* again". But this time Canadians did say: "Yes, we are confident. We know we can compete. We know there are opportunities out there that we will take advantage of as a result of the Free Trade Agreement". Canadians said yes to tomorrow, yes to our own capabilities, and yes to free trade.

**Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commence by congratulating Mr. Speaker on

his re-election to this House and to thank my electorate for their support.

I will be addressing the House partly in my aboriginal language, Slavey, which is one of the Dene languages of the Northwest Territories. This is with the assistance of an interpreter, Mrs. Eleanor Bran, from the Language Bureau, Government of the Northwest Territories in Yellowknife. Before addressing the House, Mr. Speaker, I have some background information in order to put my remarks into perspective.

The Northwest Territories has a population of approximately 52,000 people. The Northwest Territories constitutes 36 per cent of the Canadian land mass, a resource rich land mass at that. Now I will go into my aboriginal language.

Native people, Dene, Métis, and Inuit total slightly over half of the population, most of whom live in small communities. Fifty per cent of the population is located in major regional centres. A small dispersed population and a relatively underdeveloped transportation system result in high shipping costs and limited access to market. It also means that we have the highest cost of living in Canada. Yellowknife, our capital city, is linked to southern Canada by roads, but the cost of living is still 50 per cent higher than in Edmonton.

At first glance we can say the Northwest Territories economy is doing well. The average growth of the territorial economy over the past five years has exceeded 20 per cent, but this figure is misleading. Seventy-five per cent of territorial income in 1986 was received by people in the seven largest communities. There are, in fact, over 50 communities in the Northwest Territories. Income and employment problems persist in small communities. Unemployment in Yellowknife has remained around 5 per cent, and the per capita income is \$18,100. In Rae-Edzo, which is only 70 miles from Yellowknife, unemployment is 30 per cent and the per capita income is \$4,600. Proximity to larger centres does not guarantee prosperity. In the smaller communities there is a greater need for and dependence on government transfer payments. The distribution of wealth is a problem. The Government of the Northwest Territories is to be commended for its efforts in this area.

I now go back into Slavey.

Our population is the fastest growing in Canada. There is also an increasing preference for wage employment in the communities. Job opportunities are very limited and the population is not as mobile as that in the larger centres or in southern Canada.