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I campaigned in my riding of Prince George—Bulkley Valley on fairness, fairness for the people of Prince George—Bulkley Valley, because we did not have that under the Conservative administration. We had 23 years of combined representation in the City of Prince George and we have seen nothing under the Conservatives.

We want to change that. We do not ask for everything. Most definitely we ask for an opportunity to have our say and our input. Many Members who represent rural ridings like I do had to deal with some of the programs that the Government brought forward and its bungling on issues like the northern tax allowance that affected my constituents in communities like McBride, Burns Lake and Houston. The only thing we asked for was an opportunity to have our say. We did not have that under the Conservatives and now, because with their hijacking of the rules, they are limiting that even further.

Through us, Canadians and the people of my riding have an opportunity to have that say in legislation and on motions before the House. However, as the Government rams this legislation through the House, we are not having that say. If we do not have that say, neither do our constituents.

As we begin to discuss this legislation next week, it is critical that we are given the opportunity to present our amendments and debate fully the legislation. January 1 is not engraved in stone. It is not a date by which we have to pass any legislation. As my colleague, the Member from Victoria stated earlier, it was the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) who set the date for this election, in full knowledge of what kind of timetable he would have.

It is our responsibility as Members from all Parties and all sides of the House to express the concerns that we have over this legislation. I call upon Members opposite to abandon their ways and return the House to its normal practice of reasonable and thoughtful debate.

As an outside observer of this House and its rules for some time, I think it is a pity that it is now rare that we have an opportunity to see full debate. It is an honour that Stanley Knowles is with us in the House from time to time to give guidance about what we must debate. The most important reason why we are here, regardless of where we are from and what we stand for, is to provide input to this House and represent the views of our constituents.

I look forward to next week when we debate the substance of the trade legislation, when we show Members opposite and the Government that we are

serious about representing the concerns of our constituents, the people of British Columbia and, in my case, the people of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the privilege of addressing this House. As this is the first time I have spoken in the House, I want to thank the voters of my riding who sent me here.

My riding of Halton—Peel is one of the newly created ridings under redistribution and encompasses a number of communities. They include Bolton, Burlington, Georgetown and Acton. My riding is rural and urban. I believe that its make-up is a reflection of the complexion of Canada as a whole. Such a riding will benefit under free trade very strongly.

I believe this was indicated by the fact that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) chose my riding to kick off his national campaign. He was able to tour a plant in Georgetown that will benefit substantially from free trade and will likely see the creation of many new jobs under the provisions of the Free Trade Agreement.

During the course of the campaign in our riding we took pains to make sure we adequately surveyed manufacturers and retailers in the community. We surveyed all the Chamber of Commerce manufacturing members and different chambers throughout the riding about what free trade will do for them. We asked if they were afraid of it, whether they looked forward to it, and what their business plans would be as a result. Well over 70 per cent of the respondents, not large corporations but small and medium sized businesses from 12 employees to 300, said yes to free trade. They said there is no question that they will benefit from free trade and will likely add employment as a result.

I want to thank the Prime Minister. I want to thank the Government of Canada for its vision. I want to thank them for looking to the future, not to the past or the status quo.

As a new Member I have been somewhat surprised over the last four days at what I have seen and heard in the House. For example, a little while ago we heard the Hon. Member for Winnipeg South (Mr. Axworthy) make some interesting comments. He repeated a statement in the House that he had noted on *Canada A.M.* yesterday. He said: "Unfortunately, an election is just an exercise in raw numbers". How can he believe that? An election is an exercise in democracy. An election is the people speaking. An election is the highest authority that we can have. When the people speak they

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ask us to come here and serve them. The people have done that. They have spoken and we are now their servants here in the House.

The Hon. Member also said that a lot of Conservative candidates during the election faced a barrage of questions about free trade. Of course we faced questions. We certainly faced them after the leaders of the opposition Parties ran around the country making totally irresponsible statements about the contents, influence and outcome of the Free Trade Agreement.

Because of fearmongering we were answering questions, yes. Because of scare tactics we were answering questions. We were answering them about medicare. We were assuring Canadians that there was no threat to medicare. We were talking about old age pensions. We were reassuring people who had been needlessly frightened that old age pensions would not be cut. We were answering that social programs will not be touched in this country. We were talking about the environment and how free trade does not in any way threaten our ability as a country and a society to protect our environment.

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We were talking about and answering questions about energy. We were saying that in no way does the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement jeopardize our adequate and secure access to energy. We were talking about cultural protection. We were even answering questions about our water. Some of the most insane things that were said about free trade were said about our water, about the fact we had to sell it out.

I have also heard in the House today that the Conservatives kept the trade deal under wraps, that they refused to tell the Canadian people what was in it. Nothing could be further from the truth. This House saw the Free Trade Agreement debated for 15 months. We had a debate that was fully open at all times to all Canadians to participate in.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada, any government, is elected to negotiate complex treaties, complex deals, on behalf of Canadians. That was done in this instance. I think that the Free Trade Agreement is just as complex and just as important as, for example, the Auto Pact was, and few Canadians read the Auto Pact, few Canadians have expressed a desire to know exactly how the Auto Pact works, but it benefits Canada. It is exactly the same principle.

The Government was elected to negotiate on behalf of the people. That is the mandate. We have not hidden the Free Trade Agreement under wraps for one minute. I can speak from my own experience throughout the election campaign in the new riding of Halton—Peel where we requested from the other candidates and received a series of debates exclusively on free trade, taking place in different parts of the riding.

We did a survey of manufacturers, as I mentioned, and got very encouraging results. We undertook a canvass of all voters. We offered them consultation at every step of the way on any questions regarding free trade. We established toll-free phone numbers, a free trade hot-line that any citizen could call to talk to me directly for information.

I took the time to read and understand the agreement in its entirety, and when I did, to produce a document of my own, a guide to free trade in every-day language that citizens could use, read and understand. I know many other Hon. Members did similar things in their own ridings during the election campaign.

We also brought in cabinet Ministers to be fully accountable, from the Prime Minister on down, cabinet Ministers who explained what free trade meant and who helped people to understand. At no time was there anything to hide in this agreement, nor did we attempt to hide anything at any time.

The election campaign was won on one simple principle; that is, tell the people the truth, and when you have told them the truth, they will support you. It was not easy, but we did it because once Canadians understood free trade, they knew what they were voting for and they voted decisively, returning the Government with an overwhelming majority. So the people have elected a Government to implement free trade. That was the purpose of the election.

As a new Member of Parliament, I have been surprised by some of the things I have seen in this Chamber. I have been surprised by some of the things I have heard during Question Period. I have been surprised by opposition Members who believe the election campaign is still on. Well, they are wrong. They are wrong to blame every corporate layoff or rationalization for the next number of years on free trade without giving equal credit to the fact that the economy now is a tremendously strong engine of growth. Last month alone 66,000 jobs were created in Canada. That is 2,000 jobs a day, an awfully impressive record of achievement. The economy did that, not free trade.

Free trade has not cost us a job. It likely has not created a job so far, but the powerhouse of the economy the Government has created over the past four years has done that, with unemployment down, inflation down, the value of the dollar up and housing starts strong. Free trade is the way to continue that.

As I said, it is not the past we have to look to, it is not the status quo, but it is the future. Free trade is the future. It is the way to build upon the achievements of the past. It is the way to avoid the next recession. Free trade is the way to counter a global move toward trading blocs around the world. Free trade is the way to gain access to the world's largest, richest and most important market. Free trade is the way, for the first time in 140 years of our history of trading with the Americans, to have a dispute settlement mechanism. We have never had that. We have never had a way to take the Americans and their bad trade laws to court. Now, for the first time, we have a mechanism to protect Canadians.

We now have some protection against American protectionism. If the Free Trade Agreement did nothing more than that, it would be a tremendous success. But free trade is not everything. We are also looking toward GATT, and as the conference in Montreal showed last week, we are intimately involved in that phase of negotiations for world trade as well.

The motion we are debating is intended to expand the debate on free trade and to give us all an opportunity to get on the record. Free trade will pass. You know it and I know it, Mr. Speaker. No matter what is said about it in this Chamber, free trade will pass. That is because Canadians want it to pass and Canadians have decided.

I would like to say in conclusion that I think the silliness of this debate should end. I think we should get on with it. I think we should do what the people have asked us to come here to do, to stop being partisan, to start being constructive and to remember, all of us, that our first loyalty is always to the people who elected us. So let us get on with it. Let us do what the people told us to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Nelson A. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to bring to your attention what I consider to be a problem with the motion as it is before us. I would like to draw your attention to paragraph five of the motion which reads as follows:

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"That, for the duration of this session or until otherwise ordered, the provisions of Standing Order 73(1) and (2) respecting committee stage of Public Bills be suspended, and all such Bills be ordered for referral to the committee of the Whole:—"

Obviously what the Government is attempting to do here is to eliminate the requirement for a legislative committee so that the Bill can go directly to Committee of the Whole. We all understand that.

Standing Order 73(1) states:

"Every public bill shall be read twice and referred to a committee before any amendment may be made thereto."

Standing Order 73(2) states:

"Unless otherwise ordered, in giving a bill second reading, the same shall be referred to a legislative committee, except as provided in section (3) of this Standing Order. A motion to refer a bill to a committee shall be decided without amendment or debate."

In order to achieve its objective of eliminating the legislative committee stage of the trade Bill, the Government obviously had to include a provision for suspending Standing Order 73(2). However, in suspending Standing Order 73(1), the Government House Leader has, I would contend, unwittingly opened a Pandora's box. Let me briefly review once again the provisions of Standing Order 73(1) as it now stands. It states:

"Every public bill shall be read twice and referred to a committee before any amendment may be made thereto."

The purpose of this Standing Order, as I read it, is to prohibit the possibility of amendment to the substance of a Bill at second reading. The Standing Order states that the Bill must have second reading and be referred to a committee before any amendment may be made to it. This is explicit in the text of the Standing Order. Yet the motion that we are now debating, standing in the name of the Deputy Government House Leader, suspends this provision and the amendment to the motion offered this morning by the Government Whip makes no change whatsoever to this part of the text.

If this motion passes, I suggest that what the Government will have done will be to have opened up the possibility of amending the substance of the free trade Bill at second reading. If Standing Order 73(1) is suspended, what is to prevent any Member of the House from proposing a motion to make a change to Clauses 1, 2, 3, 25 or whatever? What normally prevents this from happening is the existence of a specific Standing Order preventing such motions, such as Standing Order 73(1). As I have said, if this motion passes and Standing Order 73(1) is suspended, there is nothing preventing such motions from being brought forward.