

Oral Questions

then had difficulty in respect of its ratification by a provincial legislature. I will acknowledge that. I also acknowledge that failure to ratify has brought about some very serious difficulties. But that was not the first failure that we have had constitutionally.

In 1982 the Constitution was repatriated without the endorsement of the province of Quebec and that too has brought about very serious difficulties which this government and this Parliament are trying to prevent.

Mr. Speaker: I want to observe that there has been on the part of the opposition some determination to keep the questions shorter and I hope that will be kept under consideration by all sides of the House.

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TRADE

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade. The government has not been open with the Canadian people about what it hopes to achieve in the trade negotiations involving Canada, the United States and Mexico. The minister says he seeks a single comprehensive agreement, not two or three agreements, but a single comprehensive agreement.

What will be in that single agreement? In the existing Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, energy is in. But both the Mexicans and the Americans have said that in a trilateral agreement, energy will be out. How can the government negotiate a single comprehensive agreement when Canada says that energy is in and Mexico says energy is out?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it must have taken a lot of energy to come up with that question.

Canada has not said energy is out or that anything is out in the proposed negotiations between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. There will be no negotiation until and unless the U.S. Congress approves the fast-track authority that President Bush has asked them for. So it is not anticipated that negotiations could begin until the end of May or early June.

Mexico has not said that energy is out or whether energy is in. But we all know that Mexico has a very sensitive concern about the ownership of oil. They have said that discussions about the ownership of oil are out

because the Mexican Constitution is in. We have said that we are not going to negotiate the terms of the Mexican Constitution.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to obscure the discussions and the Canadian people are no wiser from his answer than they were five minutes ago about what it is they expect.

Yesterday the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources stated that the remaining limits of foreign investment in the energy industry should be removed. The Minister for International Trade has said repeatedly that the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement does not need to be reopened. The Mexicans say that energy is not in. Canada now says that the remaining provisions in the energy section, Chapter 19 of the free trade agreement, should be reopened.

Will the Minister for International Trade state, once and for all, what it is that Canada seeks in these negotiations and will energy be on the table or not?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, any proper subject for the negotiations on trade will be on the table to be discussed. Whether Canada, Mexico or the U.S. agrees to any particular side of an issue will have to be decided when the issue arises. We will agree to anything that is in the national interests of Canada, but we will not agree to anything that is not.

With respect to investment, I am glad to report that investment in Canada has increased greatly as a result of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and we would anticipate this would be even more so under a North American free trade agreement.

I am glad to see that my hon. colleague agrees with me, that foreign investment is good for Canada. It creates jobs and we have been able to get Canada going again as a result of our attitude towards foreign investment.

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[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said that we needed the executive tax deduction, and I will quote the minister: "We have a tax system in Canada that we must maintain in a