

*Supply*

I would also make the following case, which is a technical one but still important. One of the real problems with the bilateral agreement is that it carries with it the potential for being discriminatory against other countries. This Government has never made it clear, even though it has been asked, when it makes an agreement or signs a deal with the Americans whether it will be based on the most favoured nation principle of GATT. In other words, is it non-discriminatory? Is it available and accessible to all other countries? The Government has never been prepared to make such a commitment. That is what creates serious bad vibrations among the other countries of the world.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Questions and answers are supposed to be short and sharp. The Hon. Member for Cariboo—Chilcotin (Mr. Greenaway).

**Mr. Greenaway:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Hon. Member if he can explain to us why shakes and shingles were not bound into the GATT agreement. I think that is something which probably happened during the previous administration. Perhaps there is a reason for it, although I am not aware of it and I would like to know what it is.

**Mr. Axworthy:** Mr. Speaker, that is a question which I have asked myself. I have had discussions with some of the negotiators who were involved at the Tokyo round of agreements. I have had to ask why it was left off. I think the reason was that it went back so far. Perhaps the Minister for International Trade might elucidate in this respect. However, there had been a free flow of activity going back some 30 or 40 years. I honestly say that it was a mistake not to do it. I do not know if it was our Government which did it. If we slipped up then, fine, let us say so. However, it does make my point that we should have all of these articles clearly within the GATT system since that is the way in which we can obtain the best protection. That is why, in a sense, the shake and shingle industry is a case in point that we should carefully examine.

I can only suggest to the Minister that I have tried to trace the history of this matter. I have talked to people who were on the negotiating team and I have not received a satisfactory answer yet. It is one which I think would be worth pursuing.

**Mr. Speaker:** Further questions. If there are no further questions or comments, then debate.

**Mr. Caccia:** Mr. Speaker, I have a question.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am sorry, but the Hon. Member rose after I called debate. I said questions.

**Mr. Caccia:** Mr. Speaker, I have a question.

**Mr. Speaker:** With respect, the Hon. Member rose after I called debate. On debate, the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon).

**Mr. Caccia:** I rose on a question, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Chair called questions and comments twice and then called for debate. I am sorry. I am sure the Hon. Member will have a chance to participate later. The Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor.

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor):** Mr. Speaker, I look forward very much this morning to a debate that I think can be one of the most important debates we have had in the House of Commons on this issue. Over recent weeks there has been a series of exchanges dealing with the issue. However, I think we are at the stage now, because of statements by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) this weekend, at which some new possibilities have been opened up. I very much hope that the exchange which takes place around this quite useful motion will help to make some progress in what has been a very difficult debate thus far.

I wish to concentrate my remarks on what the Government's strategy has been. I wish to offer some challenges to that strategy. However, I want to start out by suggesting that the motion before us is straightforward and one we can support. However the approach being taken by that Party perhaps places too much emphasis at this time on GATT and multilateral negotiations as the solution to a more immediate crisis than the GATT system is able to handle. GATT is very much the framework within which our broad trade policies should be pursued as a strategy over the years, but at this point, with the crisis faced by the lumber sector, the capacity of GATT to move quickly and to play an effective role in this problem is relatively limited.

● (1140)

Having said that, let me concentrate on what the Government itself has done with respect to trade policy. Frankly, since election day there has been a confusing, tangled web of shifting strategies and, even more important, contradictory statements on the part of the Government. This has left many Canadians with a sense of great unease and concern over the lack of leadership and direction exercised in this area.

If I may say so, Mr. Speaker, this whole thing has been like a dance of the seven veils. There has been at least seven clear positions taken by the Government, positions which were gradually stripped away leaving us at this point in time—and I say this quite genuinely—without any clear sense of direction. We do not know where these people are trying to take us.

The great strategy at the beginning of the debate was to keep the issue in as low a profile as possible. The Government felt that if it kept a low profile on this issue, it could possibly run this thing through, somehow escaping the notice and opposition of the Canadian people, and simply put it into effect. Clearly that particular approach has been thrown to the winds. That was the first veil to go.