

S.O. 21

Act. Today, in the absence of this Act, we have no effective competition legislation in Canada. After this Bill is passed we will have, for the first time, competition legislation which has teeth.

Both the Official Opposition and the Government favour speedy passage of this Bill in order to get some control over the situation. However, the NDP seems determined to delay passage of this Bill while still complaining of increased corporate concentration and decreased competition. It is time for the NDP to stop this charade and give Canadians a law which can offer them protection.

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[Translation]

TRADE

REQUEST FOR PREMIERS' CONFERENCE ON PARTICIPATION IN
FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. Raymond Garneau (Laval-des-Rapides): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question I put to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) yesterday, he did not want to say whether a federal-provincial conference of First Ministers would be convened to define the Premiers' role in free trade negotiations with the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I would strongly suggest that such a conference has become imperative because several provinces, including Ontario and Quebec, have voiced serious reservations on these free trade negotiations. A survey has revealed that close to 100,000 jobs are on the line in Montreal alone.

I urge the Prime Minister to honour his promise and allow the provinces to participate in the negotiations. That is why a federal-provincial conference should be held before Canadian negotiators are given a specific mandate.

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[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REGULATION CHANGE—POSITION OF GOVERNMENT BACK-
BENCHERS

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Member for Annapolis Valley—Hants (Mr. Nowlan) told a group of Armed Forces retirees outside the House of Commons that he and other Progressive Conservative Members oppose his Government's move to deny unemployed pensioners UIC benefits. If this is true, I challenge him and the Progressive Conservative back-benchers to have the Government bring this matter to a vote now. The House of Commons can then determine how many back-benchers are speaking out of both sides of their mouths at the same time.

• (1110)

BALTIC EVENING

COMMEMORATION OF FORMER INDEPENDENCE OF BALTIC
STATES

Mr. Andrew Witer (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, last night Canadians of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian origin gathered on Parliament Hill to commemorate the independence of the Baltic States which was lost after the occupation of their homelands by the Soviet Union. At this 14th annual Baltic Evening we were reminded of our good fortune as Canadians able to live and practise the tenets of democracy and social justice, and how valuable and fragile these rights are. The Baltic States are subjected to harsh policies of Russification and cultural genocide.

In Canada the cultures of the Balts flourish and there is the constant hope that their artistic and linguistic heritage will not be lost. As proud Canadians, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians contribute their strength and perseverance—ever mindful of and ever vigilant—in the cause of freedom.

Canada does not recognize the forcible occupation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union. Parliamentarians and diplomatic dignitaries joined with them to mark this special occasion. As Canadians from many backgrounds, we join with them in the continued effort to restore justice, freedom, and democracy in eastern Europe.

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AGRICULTURE

IMPROVED CROP INSURANCE INITIATIVE

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the recent agreement in principle to provide increased crop insurance coverage for farmers facing successive years of crop losses. Areas of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, where widespread losses occurred in 1984 and 1985, will be eligible. Under the new program, additional coverage equal to 10 per cent of average yield, to a total maximum of 80 per cent of average yield, will be tacked on to the 1986 crop insurance purchased by individual farmers. No additional premium will be charged for this enhanced protection. This all-risk benefit will be provided under the Crop Insurance Act, based on crop insurance principles. To be eligible a farmer must apply for insurance by April 30, 1986.

I commend the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) and his three western provincial counterparts on this initiative, and note as well their continuing commitment to bring a long-term comprehensive crop disaster program into place for 1987.