

Oral Questions

[Translation]

BILL C-130—REQUEST THAT MINISTER DELETE CLAUSES 6 AND 9

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, the Minister is skirting the issue, because he knows perfectly well that he consulted the provinces and that they told him quite clearly not to include Clauses 6 and 9 in Bill C-130. That these clauses impinge on areas of provincial jurisdiction is clear, since the Premier of Quebec has to table legislation in the National Assembly to prevent the federal legislation from doing just that.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister is this: Now that we have nothing more to add and the Minister is aware of provincial objections to these two clauses, will he do the sensible thing and withdraw these two clauses?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I can reassure the hon. gentleman right here and now that we are not withdrawing Clause 9 which is made more than necessary by the dog-in-the-manger attitude of the Premier of Ontario and his Government. We are not going to withdraw it, Mr. Speaker. There can be no Canada-U.S. FTA without Clause 9 in the Bill. Nor are we going to withdraw Clause 6 which is a declaratory clause, as Premier Bourassa has said, that maintains our rights.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Your American masters would not allow you to do that.

Mr. Crosbie: The Premier of Quebec said this and I quote him from yesterday "We discussed the situation"—that is he and I— "and we would have preferred another approach". If there could have been another approach, we would have preferred it as well, but I must say—

Mr. Axworthy: The Americans would not let you.

Mr. Crosbie: He said "The Quebec Government's position on this type of federal decision is no different from the one taken by successive governments for 40 years".

Some Hon. Members: Time!

Mr. Crosbie: The Hon. Members don't like to hear this. It is long past time.

DEFINITION OF SUBSIDY

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister and I will do my best to ask them devoid of rhetoric and I hope the Minister will reciprocate.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: I will try, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Oshawa.

Mr. Broadbent: I will try again, Mr. Speaker.

The Government clearly believes that with this proposed law it has the authority to pass regulations in the area of the regulation of wine and spirits traditionally in the constitutional domain of the provinces. I see the Minister nodding in agreement, that that is what they believe their constitutional right is in the circumstances.

● (1430)

If this is the case, does the Minister also believe that when the Government sits down with the United States, to discuss, as it plans to, what constitutes a subsidy, the federal Government will also have the right to act independently to amend provincial legislation enacting social and regional development policies, for example, that the federal Government considers to be inconsistent with the agreement it has negotiated with the United States? That is a factual question, and I would appreciate getting the Minister's clear, factual understanding of the Government's position on this important matter.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I welcome a question from the hon. gentleman that is devoid of rhetoric. It was also, of course, devoid of much sense. Nevertheless, I will attempt to deal with it without rhetoric myself.

I do not at the present time know of any social policy or regional development policy of this Government or of a province that is inconsistent with the free trade agreement. That is our position. If any of them are challenged in the United States, either before the FTA goes into effect or after, we will be protecting our right to have these kinds of policies in our own country, as we have in the past.

As to what may be a subsidy or not, that is a question for dispute and argument. It is not yet settled. We have our strong views on what is a proper subsidy, and there are certain GATT rules understood. This process we hope to expedite as quickly as we can, and have a definition that is as reasonable and as sensible as is possible to achieve.

POWER OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, the last half of the Minister's answer is, of course, what I was asking about. The Minister knows that the next five to seven years are precisely the period in which what constitutes a subsidy will be negotiated.

Since the Government is resting its case on the use of the federal Government's trade and commerce power as justification for legislating within the provincial domain in wine and spirits, is it not, by inserting in Clause 6 the override power, claiming well in advance, in negotiating what constitutes a subsidy in the years ahead, that it will have the authority, quite clearly and unilaterally, according to the federal Government, to pass regulations for social and regional development policies if, in negotiations with the United States,