

Oral Questions

People making those decisions today, who will make them tomorrow, and who made them yesterday, have made and are making them with the understanding that if we move in that direction obviously assistance will be retroactive.

Mr. Foster: Why wait?

* * *

TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT—PROPOSED CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATION

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Since the U.S. implementing Bill on the trade agreement has now come from the two committees which had to handle it and since that Bill has, in fact, amended the agreement itself by references to moves against Canada in at least 12 economic sectors in the future, on everything from automobiles to oil and gas to zinc alloys, does the Minister himself consider it fair that the United States should, in effect, renegotiate this agreement while the Canadian Parliament is faced with a Bill which simply reflects the original signed agreement?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I would have thought by now even the hon. gentleman would recognize that there is a considerable difference between the two systems of government in the two countries. One is the congressional system where the President is independent of Congress, and a Congress is independent of the President. The Americans do not have party discipline like in the New Democratic Party where, if the Leader says "bray like a donkey", then New Democrats all bray like donkeys.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crosbie: In the United States the Americans do not have that.

What we have now are two key congressional committees, the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee, which have resolved most of the differences between them. They have issued a press release with recommendations to the administration on what they feel should be in the implementing legislation.

The process has not stopped. The Energy Committee has to make its recommendations yet, but when they are all finished making their recommendations the administration will have to decide finally which legislation to introduce into Congress this month on behalf of the administration. Then everyone will have to vote straight up or down. But the Americans will vote, because in the United States they have not said that they will obstruct, try to hold up matters, or try to stop the majority from having their way. The Americans will do the democratic thing in the United States of America.

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Minister that Senator Max Baucus, who is a member of this joint deliberation process, on CBC on Sunday morning indicated very clearly that the administration had been part of the process which had formed these recommendations and it intended to support them.

[*Translation*]

REDUCTION OF TARIFFS ON PLYWOOD—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I have the following supplementary. The Minister said that the Government protested against the decision to delay the reduction of tariffs on plywood, but the U.S. bill has maintained this decision. What is the Government doing now to protest this continuation?

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman knows that we sent a note of protest with respect to the plywood matter to the U.S. administration. The process is not finished yet. No formal, completed piece of legislation has yet been put before the Congress. The process continues.

I have protested to Mr. Yeutter. We have protested to Secretary Baker. We will continue to take the position that in our view the suggested plywood provision is inconsistent with the free trade agreement, and if they proceed with it we will take action under the free trade agreement to challenge it, or we will take some other action of our own that will penalize the Americans just as we feel they are penalizing us.

I must say that the Americans do feel that they have a grievance in connection with plywood standards. We cannot be blinded to the fact that the other side may have an argument, and they think they have an argument, but I am putting forward with all of the strength and conviction that I can muster our objections to these suggested provisions.

Mr. Langdon: God help us if there is that much strength and conviction being put forward that the Minister himself would suggest that the Americans actually do have an argument in this case.

LANDING RIGHTS FOR FISH CATCHES

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, since the Government has protested against these other areas, why has the Government not protested against the provision in these Bills that allows the President and indeed requires the President to take action against Canada if we impose, as we promise to do, requirements for landing rights for western fish caught in Canadian waters? Why has the Government not made such a protest?