

*Oral Questions*

I was amazed to learn from my colleagues that the Conservative majority on the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade have rammed through a motion calling for hearings to begin next week and to terminate on December 4. That means there will only be four days of public hearings after a final text of the agreement is received. I find that to be a violation of the Prime Minister's commitment to the House. It is absurd, dangerous and anti-democratic.

Will the Prime Minister live up to his commitment to allow Canadians to have time to analyze a final text of this very important agreement, to make their submissions, to come before the parliamentary committee after the text is received, and not to have a meaningless discussion before that text is received?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in the proposal of the Government that is at variance at all with what I or the Minister of Finance have said.

Although the final text is yet to arrive, we are trying to get this into a parliamentary forum so that Canadians can be consulted and can debate the issues across the country, as my hon. friends would no doubt want. As soon as the definitive text is received it will be submitted to the committee, on which I presume it can conduct other or more precise hearings if it wishes.

The absence of a definitive text has not prevented the Liberal Government of Ontario from holding ministerial hearings across the province. This is a Members' committee. Surely the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition would not want to prevent ordinary Members of Parliament from consulting with Canadians on this important issue.

[Translation]

NEED FOR DEFINITIVE TEXT OF CANADA-UNITED STATES TRADE AGREEMENT—OPPORTUNITY FOR THOROUGH DISCUSSION

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, any intelligent person knows perfectly well there are hundreds of groups in this country, hundreds of Canadians who want to appear before Parliament to express their views on the trade agreement with the United States. First they need a definitive text. Then they have to prepare their briefs. They have to analyse the details to examine the impact on their own transactions and the companies they represent. They have to make reservations to travel to Ottawa and express their views before the Members of this House. To do all that requires very careful preparations. Why start committee hearings before the definitive text is published? Why try to avoid an in-depth discussion with Canadians who ought to be able to analyse their own situation in terms of a definitive text?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I increasingly get the impression that the Leader of the Opposition does not want Canadians to speak out on this

very important document. The absence of a definitive document—

**An Hon. Member:** What document?

**Mr. Mulroney:** Yes, but we submitted . . . A document was submitted here in the House. Premier Bourassa called a meeting of a parliamentary committee to discuss free trade issues, including the documentation available. Premier Peterson in Ontario's Liberal Government has deployed a half dozen ministers across the province to get the views of Ontarians on this matter. I think it is quite normal that the Parliament of Canada should be able to do the same, both the Government and Parliament.

I know this does not suit the Liberals. You don't want the people to know how advantageous this document is for all Canadians, but we are going to let them know.

[English]

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF COMMITTEE DEADLINE

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, once again the Prime Minister is placing phoney public relations in front of serious public discussion. Will he give an undertaking that these hearings, which are beginning on the basis of a general statement of principles, will continue past the deadline set by the committee so that when the final text is received people whose businesses are being affected, industries whose future is being affected, and Canadians who are facing a document that will change the political, cultural and social nature of this country, can be examined in detail on the basis of the final text?

The undertaking we want from the Prime Minister of this country is that the commitment and promise he made to this Parliament will be fulfilled and Canadians will have an opportunity to make their submissions on the final text that means something in detail.

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, we are very much ready to make certain that the committee, which is of course master of its own rules—

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Oh, sure!

**Mr. Mulroney:** This is very much in keeping with parliamentary reform, an initiative of this Government which was celebrated by the Opposition some three years ago. The committee is very much able to do this. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition would have any objection to Members of Parliament proceeding on this basis, when he is ready to tear up a deal that he has not even seen yet.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mulroney:** You will have to make up your mind. You are ready to reject a document you haven't seen.