

*Oral Questions***SOFTWOOD LUMBER INDUSTRY**

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, this morning's decision by the U.S. international trade commission on the softwood lumber tariff is the start of a new trade war over our forests.

The unanimous decision means that a roller-coaster trade war over our forests has started.

I am concerned that the federal government is not fully committed to fighting Americans on this issue and that it is coasting on it.

The Prime Minister should call a summit meeting of forestry and trade ministers early in the new year to ensure that the federal and provincial governments have a united stand and remain vigilant in defending the sovereignty of our forests.

The government should defend our forests and not sell them out.

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ROYAL COMMISSION ON NEW REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party believes that a study of reproductive technologies is essential to the well-being of this country.

It is so important, in fact, that it should not be left to cronies of the Conservative government who may have received patronage appointments for no other reason than they may happen to be spouses of senior cabinet ministers.

The consequence of such patronage appointments has been absolute chaos on the part of the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies. Not only have Canadian taxpayers been kept in the dark as to how the commission's \$24.7 million budget is being spent for these appointments, but now three of the commissioners have filed a lawsuit against the chairman of the commission.

It is no wonder this government cannot get its act together to unify the nation. It cannot even get its patronage appointees to agree among themselves.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

CHILD POVERTY

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the occasion of my first question to wish you a Merry Christmas and to tell you that in your task you have our confidence.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: Despite all the lively exchanges we have in this House once in a while, I would like to extend to the government members, to the NDP members and their leaders, a Merry Christmas.

I hope that everybody will take a good rest and be in very good shape come February, when we will be back.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: While we are talking about Christmas, I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister: Is it not a good occasion for us to decide collectively that when we are back together next year, we should work on a program in collaboration with the provinces to permit the children of Canada, many of whom are hungry in schools, to have a breakfast and lunch?

There is a problem with food. We know a lot of children do not eat completely and cannot do their homework because of food problems. We should have a national program, beginning 1992.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the Leader of the Opposition first that the Prime Minister will be in the House in about 15 minutes. He has been delayed in his office.

Second, with regard to the children's program, I believe a couple of times in the House I answered that question. I said that we are now working on a strategy for children that we hope we can unfold maybe some time in February when we will try to deal with the main problems facing children in Canada today.