

Department of National Revenue, the Department which has responsibility for this matter under the law. The Hon. Member knows the nature of that law because he himself is a tax lawyer.

[Translation]

Mr. Johnston: That is irrelevant to the question, Mr. Speaker.

SALE OF GULF—ROLE PLAYED BY CABINET PRIORITIES
COMMITTEE

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri-Westmount): I would like to continue with a very simple question. Did the Priorities and Planning Committee consider the tax ruling given in the Gulf transaction? Yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker—

Some Hon. Members: Stonewall!

Mr. Foster: Check with the PMO.

Ms. Copps: Check with Barbara.

Mr. Nielsen: Essentially that is the same question that was put by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition. The hon. gentleman asked if the tax ruling was considered in P and P and I have answered that question.

Ms. Copps: What's the answer?

Mr. Nielsen: The Hon. Member, as a former Cabinet Minister, should know that questions of that nature are subject to a process under law which is administered—

Mr. Gauthier: Cover up.

Mr. Nielsen: —by the Department of National Revenue. Perhaps it would be a bit more fruitful if Hon. Members would direct questions regarding that process, if they are in doubt about it, to the Minister of National Revenue.

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TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS—ROLE OF PROVINCES

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade who is telling the provinces that they will have to surrender some of their power to free trade negotiators. Does the Minister not understand that there is a federal system of Government in this country? Will he commit the Government to respect fully the rights of the provinces as these negotiations go forward?

Oral Questions

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the House and the Hon. Member that the Minister is well aware of the rights of the provinces and their exclusive jurisdiction in certain areas. If the provinces wish it, and only with their consent, would the chief negotiator act on their behalf. There has never been nor will there ever be any suggestion of coercion on the part of this Government with respect to those rights which lie exclusively with the provinces.

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor): Mr. Speaker, in fact the Minister seems to be pushing the provinces rather than persuading them. Will the Minister agree that no provincial agricultural loans and price-support programs, to use those as an example, will be given up in negotiations without the provinces being able to veto any such concession on the part of the federal negotiators?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult at this time to defend a position or a negotiating stance when we have not as yet even commenced negotiations. In any event, even if it is the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal Government, the provinces will be fully involved and fully consulted before any decision whatsoever will be made.

REQUEST FOR PROVINCIAL VETO

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor): Mr. Speaker, the Minister is avoiding the question as he avoided it last week at the provincial Trade Ministers' Conference. I put the question to him again. Last week the provincial Ministers told the Minister that they did not want the agricultural sector to be included in the bargaining. Will the Minister give a clear and precise commitment that there will be no concessions given by the federal Government without the provinces having the right to veto those concessions where they affect provincial rights and responsibilities?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, let me make it quite clear that in those areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, obviously the provinces have, in effect, a right of veto. In those areas where the federal Government has exclusive jurisdiction, before taking any position or negotiating anything with the United States, the provinces will be fully consulted and heard.