

offering more and more in an effort to keep these talks on the rails in the face of this less than active American interest.

● (1630)

I must, therefore, ask myself what else was discussed at this meeting with Vice-President Bush? I have to raise the suspicion in my mind that the real reason Vice-President Bush rushed here was to give orders to the Prime Minister and his Government to get on with the passage of the Bill to impose the 15 per cent export tax on Canadian softwood lumber. That is why I have to express my suspicion as well about the Government suddenly deciding to bring forward this motion to choke off debate on this Bill when discussion at second reading stage had barely begun. I can see the scene now with Mr. Bush saying to the Prime Minister: "Look here, my boy. If you want us to even remember we are causing a problem with acid rain and that there are discussions going on on free trade, you had better get that export tax Bill through the House or you will be hearing from us on some other matters". I have a feeling that the Canadian representatives at that meeting said in effect: "You told us to jump, Mr. Vice-President, so all we really want to know is just how high?" Vice-President Bush then said: "Get on with that Bill to impose the export tax on Canadian lumber". Therefore, I have a suspicion, as well as do Canadians, that that is the real reason we are now facing this motion to choke off debate on this thoroughly bad Bill.

I have said this is a thoroughly bad Bill and many reasons have been advanced as to why the Bill is bad. In the time remaining to me in this debate, let me advance one or two other reasons. The Government wants to translate the export tax into some form of stumpage fee. I understand the industry is saying that to get the same yield from stumpage fees as it would get from the export tax, it would have to impose higher stumpage fees, not in the area of \$600 million but in the area of \$1.5 billion or thereabouts. These higher stumpage fees would not just apply on softwood lumber for export but on the entire tree, which would raise the price of new homes for Canadians and even for someone who only wants to put in some new flooring or build an extra room on to their home. That is an unfair burden to be placed on millions of ordinary Canadians because of the Government's bungling of the softwood lumber issue and of its general relationship with the United States.

If the American Government does not agree with the manner in which our Government translates the export tax to stumpage fees, and if it does not agree with the way in which the stumpage fees are to be used for such things as reforestation or training, then all we will have is another tax grab from the pockets of the industry and from the pockets of the Canadian consumer for this Conservative Government and for the provinces, with no real benefit for the Canadian economy.

I might also say, returning to my original point with respect to what happened at the meeting between the Prime Minister and Vice-President Bush, that if the Prime Minister had wanted to do something useful at that meeting, he should have

Point of Order

raised the matter of the Auto Pact and said categorically that the Auto Pact and its safeguards for Canadian jobs cannot and will not be on the free trade table. Instead, he admitted the subject was not even raised. The Prime Minister blew a wonderful opportunity to send a message to the Americans that the Auto Pact and its safeguards are too important to be given up and sold out on the free-trade negotiating table as the Government did with respect to softwood lumber.

I say we have to reject the motion "that the question now be put" just as we have to go on to reject this Bill which is further evidence of the way this Government is selling out our sovereignty to the Americans on softwood lumber. I said before and I will say again that if we let the Americans get away with this, they will do the same thing with the Auto Pact and its safeguards. Canadians do not want that. If the Government will not stand up for Canada, Canadians expect individual Hon. Members to do so. Let us not miss this opportunity to stand up for our country in opposing this Bill and making sure also, to the extent we can do so, that the Auto Pact is not given up and destroyed on the free-trade altar.

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POINT OF ORDER

WITHDRAWAL OF COMMENTS

Mr. John Reimer (Kitchener): Madam Speaker, reference was made earlier today to remarks attributed to me in the media as a result of an interview given on Friday, January 23, to a reporter from the *Kitchener—Waterloo Record*. I wish to make a full and complete apology to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), to my colleagues in this House, to all Canadians and particularly to the people of Quebec.

Further, I wish to withdraw, and apologize for, any direct or indirect inference that reflects negatively upon my colleagues in this House, the people of Quebec and all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: I am sure every Member in this House views the statement made by the Hon. Member as being in this House's great tradition. I thank other Hon. Members. Events as we had today are very difficult for the Chair.

[*English*]

I want to emphasize that the comments of the Hon. Member and the restraint exhibited by all Hon. Members I think speaks well of the good will and sense of appropriateness and decorum in this Chamber. I think what has happened today is an example that Hon. Members can rise above events they may regret and concern themselves with that which is of such great importance, the unity of our country and the good will of all our people among themselves and from every region of the country. I thank the Hon. Member for the very full, frank and honest statement he has made.