

Oral Questions

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I have no less an authority than the chief negotiator for Canada who said, "Well, if you call that a negotiation, then call it a negotiation".

[*Translation*]

REQUEST FOR DETAILS ON AGREEMENT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister—he is the main spokesman for this Government, does the Prime Minister really know what is going on? Canada's chief negotiator has stated that he is renegotiating the agreement, and today in the House the Prime Minister keeps telling us that the agreement was concluded on October 4. Considering that the whole process has been characterized by incompetence, stupidity and even dishonesty, will the Prime Minister stop kowtowing to the Americans to schedule a signing ceremony for January 2? Will he give Canadians both time and opportunity to study the agreement if ever a final text is produced? Will he explain to Parliament why he tabled an agreement which cannot be considered as being one? Why did he mislead the people of Canada and the Parliament of Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the question is basically unworthy of the Leader of the Opposition. He is talking about consultation with Members and the people, he who belongs to a Liberal Party which negotiated a very important agreement with the United States 23 years ago and which never did have the decency to submit it to the House of Commons for consideration by Hon. Members. That kind of behaviour is unworthy of the Leader of the Opposition.

As far as we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, the basic elements which were negotiated are still valid, contrary to what my friend is quoting. Speaking to a journalist, Mr. Reisman is reported to have said:

[*English*]

"If you call that a negotiation, call it a negotiation. Call it whatever you want."

[*Translation*]

But as far as we are concerned there has been no changes in the basic elements or in the Government position. Mr. Speaker, there has been a radical change in the approach of somebody here in the House of Commons: the Leader of the Opposition used to say that he would tear up the agreement, but now he is telling the media that he will not tear it up, that he will go to Washington to renegotiate. That is the radical change on the part of the Leader of the opposition.

[*English*]

PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, if we do not have an opportunity of a general election in defeating this agreement then we will be caught with the dynamics as we find it, but we are not bound by this agreement.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): We will not be bound by this agreement.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): What are you going to do next week, John?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The chief negotiator says that they are renegotiating the Auto Pact. The chief negotiator says they are renegotiating the shipping clauses. The chief negotiator says they are renegotiating the dispute mechanism, so, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Prime Minister why should we trust this Government, why should we trust this Prime Minister when he deposited a document with this Parliament that is not a final document and does not represent the complete agreement between the parties?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the chief negotiator did not say they were renegotiating the Auto Pact. He did not say they were renegotiating the shipping arrangements. He did not say they were renegotiating the dispute settlement mechanism. He said no such thing, and the Leader of the Opposition is consistently misleading the House of Commons and all Canadians by repeating statements like that.

The only change that has taken place is by the Leader of the Opposition who stood up in this House, I think on October 3 or 4 and said, "I am going to tear up the agreement". Now he is saying "I can't tear it up. I may have to renegotiate it".

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): We will.

Mr. Mulroney: Let me relieve you of any worry. You will never get the chance to renegotiate it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CANADIAN POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

By way of introduction we know how often it has been that the Prime Minister and the chief negotiator have had to contradict one another. Here Mr. Reisman is quoted as saying that the Maritime Shipping Act is something that is on the table being renegotiated and the matter will have to be taken to Cabinet for further advice.

Why is it that this negotiating team is prepared to accept further negotiations on a matter which the Americans want to entrench further and protect, namely, their maritime industry, while at the same time the Canadian trucking industry, which just last week before the Commons committee said that this trade agreement will put that entire industry in jeopardy why are we prepared to negotiate American demands when a major transportation industry is going to go down the drain along with many others, data processing, food processing and agriculture which have all said the same thing? Why is the