

Oral Questions

the Prime Minister? Why is it that the Leader of the Government is so far behind on the facts of this particular issue?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I would advise the House that apparently this was a last-minute development which occurred—

Mr. Deans: There's the reason.

Mr. Kelleher: —in the Senate Finance Committee. As Mr. Yeutter himself explained, he too was very surprised and taken aback by the events. I can assure the Right Hon. Member that the people who assist us in these negotiations are very good people and are keeping on top of things for us.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, we were really on top of that issue. Maybe the real reason is the Minister—I do not know.

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNITED STATES

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my second question to the Minister.

According to the Prime Minister, President Reagan gave him the assurance that all was well in these negotiations and that the Administration would guarantee their success.

Apparently, somebody overlooked the fact there is separation of powers in the United States, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

My question to the Minister is therefore: Why has the Government conducted its business in such a way that we are now on the defensive with the U.S. senators?

[English]

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, we are certainly not on the defensive in any way, shape or form with respect to these negotiations. We have reminded the administration and the President of his commitment that there would be a clear launch for these discussions. We have asked the President to advise the Senate Finance Committee of that. This is presently a matter between the administration and the Finance Committee and we are awaiting further developments.

CANADIAN LUMBER EXPORTS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I thought that the new-style diplomacy down there was to keep in touch with Capitol Hill at the same time as keeping in touch with the administration. Despite this so-called special relationship with the United States, why is it that we have gotten ourselves into a defensive position? Will the Minister assure us that the Canadian Government will not make any concessions against the export of Canadian lumber in order to get that Senate committee back on track?

• (1420)

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): I would again like to reassure the Hon. Member, the Leader of the Opposition, that we are not in any defensive position whatever. The fact that these discussions at present have been stalled in the Senate Finance Committee will not in any way have any bearing on our ongoing discussions with respect to current trade problems or irritants.

PHARMACEUTICAL PATENT LAW

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister for International Trade. The amateur hour approach that has been taken to the trade negotiations with the United States has already led the Prime Minister to concede on energy, on publishing, and on foreign investment, and we have received absolutely nothing in return.

Will the Minister now give assurances to this House that the Government will not cave in to the pressures to change the pharmaceutical patent law? Will he make it very clear that that law will stay to protect the Canadian consumer and that we will not give in to the American multinationals?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, obviously the Hon. Member and myself have a different interpretation how events are going. I do not feel in any way that we have conceded or given in to the Americans at any time on anything.

Dealing specifically with pharmaceuticals, lumber, or any of those issues, they stand on their own merits. They will be dealt with on their own merits. They are not in any way tied to the present discussions as to whether or not there should or should not be trade discussions between Canada and the United States.

ROLE OF PROVINCES

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the kind of approach that has gone wrong has just been exemplified by the Minister's statement. You cannot deal with issues one by one. They are part of a total package with the United States that has to be bargained effectively.

The Senate has said that the problem it has is that the Canadian Government has not made clear what the role of the provinces will be.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. A supplementary question, please.

Mr. Axworthy: In light of the statement by the Senators that they do not know what the Canadian Government's position and the provinces' position will be, can the Minister tell us what steps will be taken to clarify what the role of the