

Supply

Mr. Hockin: Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question for the Minister from Winnipeg—Fort Garry.

Mr. Darling: Minister?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa—Carleton): Former.

Mr. Hockin: The former Minister. The former Minister has lived through sectoral discussions with the United States and I want him to share with the House what kind of success the previous Government had in those discussions with the United States? Why does he feel that kind of strategy would be more effective today than a comprehensive strategy? Does he have a long litany of success stories in the latter years of his Government to tell us about?

My second question has to do with the GATT arrangements. Why does the Hon. Member not believe in operating against the American protectionism on two tracks instead of one? Why is it not wise for us to deal directly with the offender in this case, the Americans, through a comprehensive trading agreement, and in that way to roll back protectionism, plus the GATT negotiation track? Why just one track? The Hon. Member would like to have us on the GATT track alone and not have anything to do with the bilateral track in terms of a structured long-term negotiated framework.

● (1130)

Those are my two questions, Mr. Speaker. I would be grateful if the Hon. Member would answer them.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for the questions and also for the promotion. I would be quite happy to take his question as the future Minister from Winnipeg—Fort Garry; I am glad to answer it in those tones.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) said that we will fight the next election on his trade policy. If the Prime Minister wants to take a suicide run, then that is his business. We are all in favour of it. Ask him to call it now, we are ready and waiting. If that is what he wants to do, then let us go. There is no argument about that.

I would now like to deal with the Hon. Member's questions. First, with respect to the issue of sectoral arrangements, there has been a kind of presumption that before September of 1984 there was no history in Canada. The presumption has been that somehow everything started brand new in September of 1984. The fact of the matter is that we have been negotiating and discussing trade with the Americans on a wide variety of fronts for years. We have negotiated all types of agreements.

One of the last measures I took when I was the Minister of Transport was to negotiate successfully a major agreement on international civil aviation with the Americans. That negotiation opened up new airline routes between countries. We got along. We worked things out. We had differences of opinion; but a deal was made and struck. The problem is that as soon as one raises the matter to the level of a grand blueprint, as soon

as it is put forward as an over-arching sort of Armageddon, the fact is the Americans know they have us in a corner.

The Prime Minister himself came close to the truth when he said on Friday or Saturday in Toronto that he wants to negotiate a series of sectoral arrangements and that the Auto-Pact should be the model. We put that forward in our trade policy issued in late 1983. We had started negotiations in that respect. It was the Government of the Hon. Member which changed that. If it had continued on that track, the Hon. Member and his Party might have been much further ahead than they are now. But when they arrived in September of 1984 those discussions and talks which had already been started were erased, wiped away. This was the case because they had the great new design.

We never said that there should not be talks and discussions. This is something which can be done at different levels. It can be done at the level of a major agreement, such as a sectoral trade arrangement like the Auto-Pact. It can be done to negotiate a series of irritants. It can be done to work out various accords and understandings. There is a wide range of instruments which can be pursued in dealing with bilateral trade issues.

The important point that we have raised is that those bilateral discussions, whether they are with the United States, Japan or with the European Common Market, should be carried out in the context of a major commitment on multilateral international trade. What has happened is that the Government has made a very clear break away from the official policy of a Government that had been followed for years, and a very major break away from continuity of trade strategy in Canada. The Government said: "We believe the singularly most important trade initiative is a Canada-U.S. agreement". So the Government turned it on its head. It made it the primary motivation of trade strategy. It made it a primary focus of our trade operation. If it had simply said: "Let's negotiate with the Americans, but inside the parameters and framework of broader international strategy", it would have been much better off.

The Hon. Member asks what is the difference. He asks why we cannot do the two at the same time. First, there is the question of resources. The Hon. Member has been chairman of a committee of which I feel honoured to have been a part. It was an excellent committee which studied international relations. The testimony of many groups that appeared before the committee was to the effect that both cannot be done equally well at the same time. We have been told that it is impossible to devote the same type of resources, energy, commitment and focus on one major initiative versus another. If one reads the daily press and looks at all the headlines we must ask what the Government is talking about. It is talking about Canada-U.S. That is the major play in town. That is the drama that is being played out on the Canadian stage.