

Supply

computers and semiconductors from the United States. When you dig into it, Mr. Speaker, you find that the House had not even passed the legislation to put that duty-free situation into place for computer parts from the United States. Bill C-111 deals with that issue and that Bill has received only first reading from the House of Commons. We have not even established the lower tariffs which we were supposedly increasing.

What is worse, Mr. Speaker, is that Bill C-111 which we were destroying in the process was an exciting, dynamic possibility to set up, not just with the United States, but on a three-level basis with the United States and Japan, a free market in computer parts and semiconductors. Frankly, I could not believe the Government would not only shoot itself in the foot on computer parts, but also shoot Japan in the foot. Yet we checked this morning and found that the decision announced yesterday goes not just against the U.S. but also against Japan. We have taken a quite magnificent sectoral free trade agreement which could have given us something that every Canadian would have felt some pride in, a sectoral agreement involving Japan, the U.S. and Canada in a key high technology product, and with a stroke of the pen, another sign of complete incompetence, destroyed it. This was a piece of foolish retaliation, not thought through or taken in the context of trying to build our country instead of trying to destroy it.

● (1250)

This morning I spoke with executives of the leading computer manufacturing and importing companies in this country. They made very clear what they think of the Government's retaliation. The President of the Electronic Manufacturers Association said this measure will hurt Canadians as much as the Americans. It will have an adverse impact on Canada. There was no consultation with the industry beforehand, none whatsoever. The President of the Canadian Business Equipment Manufacturers Association said we are shooting ourselves in the foot. The industry has a good record on free trade. This action amounts to setting the clock back. The Canadian Association for Higher Technology stressed the damage being done to the industry and the fact that this will increase costs for anyone who uses computer technology. That is the technology we need to become a productive, efficient and world class producer. Yet the Government, with its foolish, short-sighted retaliation, has destroyed the pact made between the U.S., Canada and Japan in a way which will ultimately hurt every Canadian.

I put it to this House that the right thing to do to put our country back on the right path is to first try and deal with the real problems which face us; problems such as softwood lumber which the Minister of State for Forestry (Mr. Merri-thew) can tell us threaten 40,000 jobs in British Columbia; problems such as those facing fish producers in eastern Canada; problems facing steel producers in western Canada like IPSCO.

Let us deal directly with and negotiate on those problems. Let us set up a dispute settlement mechanism which can act as a kind of early warning system to give us a notion of problems coming up so both sides can try and deal with the problems. We can depoliticize the problems so that they do not explode on the floor of the House of Commons and get us caught up in the kind of incredible rhetoric we all experienced a week ago Friday.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we have to use the mechanism which has worked so well for this country in the past, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. We have to work as hard as we possibly can through that system to cut back the Americans' aggressive use of subsidies and countervailing action which damages not just us but countries in every part of the world. The U.S. has told us we cannot win the argument on a bilateral basis. If we do it through GATT, with allies who are strong and supportive, there is a chance that we can win the fight to gain exemptions from the aggressive American push on countervailing duties which is so badly hurting this country at the moment.

We in this Party, along with many Canadians, do not want to be part of some sort of grand fortress America. We want to be part of our own country. We want to have excellent trading relations with the U.S. The way to achieve that is not through comprehensive free trade, which will suck us in and make us part of that fortress America. The way to achieve it is to work on the problems which exist and build for ourselves the independence we need to ensure for ourselves a future in the international economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Questions or comments.

Mr. Cook: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon) has made a beautiful speech full of rhetoric which contributed very little to the debate. I find it ruddy offensive to listen to an Opposition interested only in playing politics with the future of this country. That is what they are doing, playing politics with this issue. Enhanced trade, not free trade, with the U.S. is the future for this country. The Hon. Member suggests that he wants to read every secret report the Government has prepared going into these negotiations. Obviously he has never played poker. He is suggesting that we go into a poker game with our cards face up on the table while everyone else keeps their cards hidden. We are not going to give him all the information and economic details we have for a very simple reason. He wants to pose, posture and play politics. I do not think he is really interested in seeing the future of this country enhanced through trade. That is the purpose of these negotiations and he knows it, even if he is not prepared to admit it here.

The Hon. Member made some comments about the expanding American economy. I should point out some historical facts to him. Western Canada could not get the capital to develop its oil industry. That money came out of Texas and Oklahoma. It is about time we appreciated the Americans. It is about time we told them how good they have