

The minister went to Japan with his begging bowl. Did the Japanese government promise to support Canada's position vigorously, that we be admitted to these talks with the three parties that are meeting and have met together? Have they agreed to press that?

Second, can the minister tell us whether the United States government has now withdrawn its objection to the participation of Canada in view of the government's surrender with reference to its election promises on FIRA, and the humiliation and emasculation of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce? Has the U.S. government now withdrawn its objection? What is the position?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am glad to see that the hon. gentleman is continuing his sometime interest in external affairs. However, he has mingled two very diverse questions. The focal point of my official visit to Japan was not, as the hon. member says, to deal with the question of the restricted trade talks, but was to urge more and freer trade between Canada and Japan, particularly to try to facilitate the entry of more Canadian manufactured and semi-manufactured products into Japan, and also to encourage Japanese investment in Canada, as well as to discuss multilateral issues.

The hon. gentleman is quite right in suggesting that I did discuss the question of the restricted trade talks with the Japanese government. I have to say that I got a somewhat different message from the two Japanese ministers with whom I discussed the question. One took the view that the matter should really be left to the United States. The other was more supportive in his response.

Coming to the other question of the hon. member, I do not know if it was a question on which he places greater stress or not, but he did slip it in at the end, the question of the American response to FIRA. The United States does not have any general objection to FIRA. They have made it clear they have no general objection to our policies either of Canadianization or FIRA. Their problems are with certain very specific things which are done by the National Energy Program and by FIRA. We are having intensive discussions on those issues with the United States to try to assure them of the fairness of our procedures.

POSITION OF UNITED STATES ON CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN TRADE TALKS

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, my sporadic interest in external affairs is less damaging to Canada than the minister's constant interest in external affairs. The organ grinder is away and the monkey is being questioned in his place today. I will come back to the question.

Has the United States withdrawn its objections, not to FIRA—we know they are continuing—not general but specific objections to the participation of Canada in the trade talks with the European Community, Japan, and the United States, which the United States has proposed? The United States is punishing the minister and the government for some irritants it

Oral Questions

caused the United States. Because of the change announced in the budget on FIRA, because of the promise of good behaviour by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, have the U.S. authorities now withdrawn their objection? That is my question to the minister. Will he answer that?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, if that was the point the honourable member was trying to make in his previous question, I am glad he had a second try. In fact the United States has not taken a position as an administration with respect to the restricted trade talks which is in the direction the honourable member suggests. Indeed, Mr. Brock, who is the ambassador with special trade responsibilities, it seems to me had attempted to sponsor a previous meeting to which Canada was not invited. That meeting was cancelled by the President, I believe, because Canada was not invited. Therefore the general position of the U.S. administration on that, and with regard to many other things, appears to be understanding of and sympathetic with the Canadian position. We are doing our best from this side of the House to work out with them the particulars of difficulties which they may have with some points of our legislation and policy.

* * *

● (1425)

THE ECONOMY

DEMONSTRATION ORGANIZED BY CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS—GOVERNMENT POLICY ON INTEREST RATES

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the acting Prime Minister. Since the budget, home owners have protested, farmers have protested, and small business men have protested the devastating effects of high interest rates. On Saturday the largest crowd in Canadian history assembled on Parliament Hill to demonstrate their outrage, and they demanded a change in the government's high interest rate policy. Is the government now prepared to listen to the people of Canada, representing every sector of the economic spectrum, and change its high interest rate policy?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I heard somebody referring to the fact that last Saturday there were no Liberal members present to witness the manifestations that took place in Ottawa. I want to emphasize the fact, so that the public will know, that it was at the very request of the CLC that meetings were organized on Thursday with ministers and different regional caucuses. That should be very clearly emphasized.

Mr. Broadbent: There were no politicians there.

Mr. Pepin: I understand my hon. friend was there.

Mr. Broadbent: No.