

Supply

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

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest when the Minister indicated the number of jobs that free trade could create in Canada. However, I recall that she was the Minister who stood in her place many, many times and promised 200,000 jobs as a result of the Western Accord. That would come as rather surprising news to people in Alberta today. Perhaps when she talks about the jobs being created here, we have to take it with a grain of salt.

My question is twofold. The U.S. Senate saw fit to provide open public hearings so people could ask questions about the implications of the talks taking place. Why do we not do something similar to that in Canada at this critical point?

In addition, would the Minister suggest how I should respond to my constituents when they ask me the following two questions. Free trade exists in lumber and shakes and shingles, yet in Canada today, particularly in British Columbia, we have been hard hit in those two areas. If we are successful in our free trade talks, does that mean the countervailing duty threat will remain in place and in effect nothing will change? How would she suggest I respond to my constituents when they ask me what the implication of these talks will be to the Okanagan fruit industry and our fledgling breweries and wineries in British Columbia? What will this mean with regard to live cattle trade with the United States? As a parliamentarian I feel a little embarrassed when those serious and legitimate questions are put to me. I feel sad that I am unable to respond specifically with regard to the likely outcome of these negotiations in critical areas. Perhaps the Minister can enlighten me and my constituents at the same time.

• (1210)

Miss Carney: Mr. Speaker, in discussing the need to consult, the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) ignores the fact that we have a very impressive consultative process in place. I remind him that a royal commission on our economic future spent two years listening to Canadians on this subject and reported in favour of this initiative. He ignores the fact that the parliamentary committee headed by the present Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Hockin) travelled the country with MPs from the opposition Parties to hear comments on these areas.

Mr. Axworthy: And we recommended against what you are doing.

Mr. Riis: Do you follow their advice?

Miss Carney: The Member failed to point out that there are approximately 300 Canadians from every industrial and cultural sector which could be affected who are part of our consultative process. There are 15 of these groups which meet regularly to review our progress on the free trade initiative.

ITAC is our major industrial consulting group which represents the major companies in Canada. We meet regularly with ITAC for advice in these areas.

We are getting an unprecedented inflow of ideas, comments and suggestions in this area. At the appropriate time these negotiations will be ratified in the House. The Member will have lots of opportunities to examine them.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa—Carleton): Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is terribly frustrating to sit on the left of the NDP as I do in this section of the House. The converse is that they are on the right of me.

The Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon) indicated that a new trade deal with the U.S. might result in 150,000 lost jobs. After our Economic Statement in 1984 his Leader said that there would be tens of thousands of jobs lost. As we all know, quite the contrary was true.

Mr. Riis: Visit Alberta.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa—Carleton): Does the Minister agree with the Member for Essex—Windsor that a new trade deal with the U.S. will actually result in a net loss of jobs for Canadians?

Miss Carney: Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with the comment made by the Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis). When we dismantled the National Energy Program, the industry in Alberta had its best year ever in terms of new jobs and new investment.

Mr. Riis: I was talking about 1986.

Miss Carney: When international oil prices resume their upward path, as they will, those people will be free of the red tape and strangling regulations which drained them of the cash flow they needed to survive downward cycles in commodity prices.

With regard to the question of the Member for Ottawa—Carleton (Mr. Turner), I do not agree with the NDP argument that free trade will lead to job loss. What is equally important, the Economic Council and other major Canadian economic groups do not agree. The numbers show that freer trade in the past has always led to new and more secure jobs. That is what the economists are telling us now. The NDP is quoting American studies to suggest that there will be job loss.

There is job loss every year in a changing society. Every year Canadians change jobs. As a matter of fact, the Economic Council says that every year nearly 3 million Canadians change jobs. We now have an opportunity to see where those job changes will take place, plan ahead and ensure that Canadians are upgraded, trained and ready to take on those new jobs in order to move into the 21st century.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister wrote to the U.S. trade representative, Clayton Yeutter, asking the U.S. administration not to approve the import surtax. Shortly