

Oral Questions

I ask the Prime Minister if he will tell President Bush over dinner tomorrow night that Canada is dropping the 15 per cent tax on lumber exports?

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of Forestry): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague, the Minister for International Trade told the House last week, it is our intention to begin negotiations quite soon with the Americans in accordance with some of the new guidelines and criteria that have been changing since the lumber tax was imposed. Any unilateral action would be harmful to Canadian interests.

We think we now have the consent of the provinces to proceed with the negotiations that will be necessary to terminate the agreement.

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AGRICULTURE

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, with all the due respect I have for the minister, the Prime Minister is going to be having dinner with President Bush.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister specifically whether he intends to raise another injurious program, the export enhancement program of the U.S., which is unfairly subsidizing American farmers and killing off the Canadian farm family.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister specifically if he intends to raise with the President of the United States Canada's intention to kill our export lumber tax and in particular, does he intend to force the President of the United States to end the export enhancement program immediately?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, we have made many representations to the United States with respect to their export enhancement tax and their export assistance program. Of course that is tied directly to the Uruguay Round of the GATT negotiations because this American program is a response to subsidization by the European Community under their common agricultural policy.

This is not a simple problem. Representations have been made by the Minister of Agriculture to the U.S.

minister in charge of agriculture. We intend to continue with these representations, but the only sure solution is the conclusion of the Uruguay Round in a way that eliminates the right to impose export subsidies.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Minister for International Trade, such as it is, I will direct my question to the Prime Minister, since he is the one who will be meeting with the President of the United States tomorrow evening.

I can understand that he may wish to remain silent on the subject of the Allaire Report, but I would like to hear from the Prime Minister of Canada himself if he agrees with his colleague the Minister for International Trade, who is now ready, at the request of the Americans, to put the Canadian culture on the table at the next round of negotiations on international trade with the United States and Mexico. Will the Prime Minister protect the 250,000 Canadian jobs that are dependent on the Canadian culture or is he ready, like his colleague, to give them up to satisfy the Americans?

• (1420)

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, this matter was dealt with through questions in the House a week or so ago.

There is no request from the U.S. for cultural matters to be put on any negotiating table because, as yet, there is no negotiating table. That will depend upon whether or not the U.S. Congress gives President Bush and his administration fast track authority and continues fast track authority for the period of the next two years.

The trade representative of the United States has simply said that they would like to discuss cultural matters. We have no objection to discussing cultural matters with the United States. We are not afraid of discussing cultural matters with anyone, but we will continue to protect Canadian cultural industries as the present minister has done so ably in the last several years.