

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT**

**Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister.

It is clear this government will do everything it can to rush NAFTA through Parliament. It will impose time allocation. It has refused to hold serious consultations, although the agreement is far from being finalized. A former negotiator for the government has said that for Canada to adopt NAFTA at a time when the U.S. Congress wants to negotiate major changes is poor strategy. It is not good for business and it is not good for democracy. So why the rush?

[English]

**Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister for Science and Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the NDP forgets to tell the House that we have, to an unprecedented degree, consulted with Parliament.

**An hon. member:** Oh, come on.

**Mr. Hockin:** The subcommittee that looked at this agreement has already heard 160 witnesses. We now have the bill before the House. We want to get the bill into committee so that it can be further looked at, even after all this pre-study, even after listening to 160 witnesses through the pre-study process. However, the hon. member's party will not let us put the bill into committee. They are simply blockading that process.

**Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, surely the hon. member is clear that debate at second reading of a bill is debate on the principle of the bill. It is essential to have a full debate at second reading and on the principle of this bill and I want to—

**Mr. Speaker:** I am having some difficulty because I think these questions are in anticipation of debate. I wonder if the hon. member could put her question more appropriately.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can. The government is clearly confused on its own position. On December 18, 1990 I was told by the government that the inclusion of labour, social, environmental matters in

NAFTA was a silly idea. I quote: "a silly idea". On June 13, 1991 I was told by the Minister for International Trade that such issues were not part of the actual trade negotiations yet now he calls these negotiations unnecessary bonuses.

My question to the government is simply this: The government is confused, the public needs more information. What is the hurry to ram through NAFTA?

**Mr. Speaker:** Just a minute. I think the hon. member is having some difficulty with the rules. The minister may want to reply, but it seems to me the question is out of order.

The hon. member on a supplemental.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the United States, one of the major signatories to the NAFTA deal, is going to go through this process with extensive negotiations, extensive debate.

I want to ask the government simply this. Why is the government going ahead with legislation which is not complete? Canadians do not have the completed negotiations. I just want to simply ask the government—

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, it is rather interesting how the NDP takes its cue from the United States when it is convenient for it to do so.

I think perhaps I can help the hon. member out. In an interview with *Business World* Mr. Steve Van Houten, the president of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association was asked this question: "Has the free trade agreement helped or hindered your members?" Mr. Van Houten replied: "Oh, it has helped considerably. In fact, exports of manufactured goods from Canada to the United States have gone up by 60 per cent since the free trade agreement came into force".

• (1430)

Those who blame the free trade agreement for all of our ills and job losses frankly do not know what they are talking about. Without this business we would be in real trouble. The interviewer asked: "And are you looking toward NAFTA?" Mr. Van Houten: "Very much so, indeed, our members are behind it. They tell us so in a 10:1 kind of a ratio".