

Oral Questions

because either of the other two countries, that is to say Mexico or the United States, do not enforce environmental standards that are as high as ours?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, of course the American situation differs from region to region. I would suggest that the hon. member look at that carefully and also look at the plans that Mexico has put in place.

In terms of his general suggestion about the panel conference this morning, the truth is that we are going to negotiate an arrangement with the United States and Mexico which will protect our industries and will help to remove our Mexican tariffs against Canada which right now are much higher than our tariffs against theirs.

It is also very important for us on the environmental front to have Mexico in a NAFTA context in which we can have further influence on environmental standards.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid the minister is a little mixed up. It was a Liberal panel conference.

Let me ask a supplementary question. Let it be noted that the minister did not respond to the question and that he did not say Canadian jobs would not be lost.

Will the minister assure us that under the agreement the Canadian ability to protect the Canadian environment will not be jeopardized in any way, shape or form? Quite specifically, will the minister assure this House that attempts to protect the environment will not be deemed a restraint in trade?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, not only is the answer yes to his request but, what is more, we are going to open a context for selling Canadian environmental technologies into Mexico.

* * *

• (1500)

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Transport.

Here we have a government that just finished undermining passenger rail by gutting VIA Rail. Now it is prepared to undermine the whole industry of cargo trade via the rails.

How can this minister permit a Crown corporation to short-haul east or west through the United States rail lines? Will the minister do the honourable thing, put a stop to it, use Canadian lines and urge the issuance of Canadian jobs rather than help her friends in America all the time?

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, this government made a very conscious decision as far as VIA Rail is concerned to ensure that taxpayers' money was used properly.

When it comes to the shipping of goods, the new company that CN has formed is to go after new business, not to change existing business, within the U.S. in order to ship Canadian goods into the U.S. market.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I return again to the minister who seems to be condoning the creation of jobs in the United States, the multiplier in the United States, and supporting American rail lines at the detriment of Canadian lines, Canadian jobs and Canadian workers.

On behalf of Canadians I ask minister and her government to put Canada first, to put our priority first. Will she put an end to this? It is not hauling south, but it is a short haul east and west via the United States of America.

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, this government is putting Canada first by making sure that we have a strong national railway that can compete on the North American continent, not just on the Canadian part of the continent. A strong Canadian railway will mean future jobs in Canada.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of State for Transport.

The questions have been about the transportation of Canadian goods to Canadian destinations along American lines, not about Canadian goods into American markets.

I ask the minister: At what point would the government refuse to accept a complete marginalization of the