

Oral Questions

he trying to build a consensus among Canadians in this country with the premiers who will have to make a final decision?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs has made that very clear. He has been working non-stop. I think that all members of all parties in this House will recognize his enormous commitment to the unity and the well-being of Canada and will applaud him for his unremitting efforts to secure that ongoing unity.

My hon. friend knows that to bring this about, the minister is following the constitutional prescription of 1982 in meeting with the provincial governments and in seeking to secure their agreement for constitutional amendments. That is the way it has to be. We are going to continue to deploy every effort.

We did not indicate that we were expecting a lack of success. We indicated that we were anticipating success, not because we plan to force a consensus on the premiers, but because we expect that the premiers are sufficiently mature and intelligent themselves, which they are, to realize the enormity of the challenge facing Canada and that they will want to put water in their wine and make honourable compromises to keep Canada together.

If the position is going to be, by every government leader, me, myself and I, they may achieve their own point of view but Canada will fail. The object of the exercise is to make sure that Canada succeeds. That is the commitment of the minister, that is the commitment of this government and I am sure that is the commitment of everybody in this House of Commons with the exception of a couple in the back row.

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[Translation]

TRADE

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade. Since the free trade agreement was signed, the United States has not stopped violating the spirit of the agreement. Now a bill in the Massachusetts legislature would again violate it by taking direct aim at the way Quebec and Hydro Quebec manage their borrowing.

This morning, we just learned that six other states might do the same.

Besides a mere letter, what real pressure will the government apply to support Quebec in its struggle to safeguard the spirit of the free trade agreement?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member has referred to is something that does concern us very much. These proposed actions, taken by state legislatures, could have the effect of boycotting Quebec Hydro bonds. That is something that could well be contrary to the free trade agreement. We have been in touch with members of the Massachusetts legislature on this. We propose to follow this matter very closely and take whatever action is necessary to put forward our rights under the free trade agreement in order that this should not happen.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, this is really part of a much larger problem. In an agreement between countries, not only the letter of the law but the spirit that underlies it is equally important. This is all the more true in an agreement as sloppily negotiated as was the U.S.—Canada Free Trade Agreement.

Canada is being hammered not only by Washington, but by individual states that are going off on tangents of their own; California in terms of the exports of natural gas from Alberta and now we see Massachusetts and six other states in terms of Quebec bonds, and through a concerted attack on Canadian owned business as a result of a flagrant misuse of buy American policies.

These issues are not going to be resolved by the dispute settlement mechanism or by simple letters to state legislators. They are destroying the very spirit the government claims was inherent in the free trade agreement.

What specific measures is the government going to undertake to protect Canadians?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is overstating the position. We have expressed concern about this. We do not like what is happening. But for my hon. friend to cast a blanket condemnation of every action that is taken and saying that this is completely counter to the spirit and the