

against the crown like anybody else. It so happens he had brought an action against the government, exercising a right we all have.

Any of us who risked sustaining damage or injury on federal property due to the negligence of a government employee would be entitled to sue the crown. Anybody, including me, any minister and the leader of the Opposition. But, to avoid controversy, the minister has decided to withdraw his appeal. If his counsel did not carry out these instructions—and if he is watching today, he can see that the minister of revenue agrees—he should have carried out his instructions to the letter.

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[English]

TRADE

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

A woman by the name of Shelley Anne Clark, who is an employee of the federal government, has publicly made serious accusations concerning the free trade agreement, including a statement that the actual text of the agreement has never been disclosed. She says that the real agreement contains terms which limit Canada's sovereignty over our resources.

On behalf of Canadians who have called me and other MPs to find out whether this is true, would the minister lay the matter to rest today by stating conclusively that the text of the free trade agreement which has been made public is in fact the true and complete agreement?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the allegations made by the Shelley Anne Clark were investigated by the previous government and found to be unwarranted. Our practices regarding privacy of information would preclude me from commenting any further on her allegations.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, could the minister state conclusively that the text of the agreement which has been made public is in fact the true and complete text? That is what people want to know.

• (1440)

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the text made available by the previous government is, in my understanding, the actual text.

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[Translation]

TOBACCO TAXES

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. While the Liberal ministers have fun passing the buck on the cigarette smuggling

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issue, the Premier of Quebec has said once again that he intends to lower the tax to curb the problem.

Is the Minister prepared to acknowledge that one of the best ways of eliminating smuggling is by reducing the excessive tax? And how does the minister feel about the Quebec Premier's proposed course of action?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I discussed this matter with the Premier of Quebec in December and discussions are under way with other governments at this time. We intend to take the necessary steps to curb smuggling as soon as possible.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): My supplemental is for the Prime Minister as he appears to have taken over question period this afternoon.

Will the Prime Minister concede that as a result of high taxes, the federal treasury has lost nearly \$600 million, according to the Finance Department's 1992 estimates alone, and that as a result of this, smokers contribute considerably less to the health care system?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that governments have lost a considerable amount of money. That is why we have decided to consult with the provinces and work together with them to address the smuggling problem. If both levels of government cannot co-operate, if one acts and the other does not, then we will not get the hoped-for results. We are working right now to achieve a consensus on an effective way of curbing smuggling.

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[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The minister is quoted in yesterday's *Toronto Sun* as saying that the government will have plans for native self-government in place within six months.

Could the minister tell the members of the House and the people of Canada, indeed the aboriginal people themselves, precisely what is meant by self-government?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I announced a process of six months of discussions with the provinces, the territories and the regional and provincial governments to assist in the implementation of the inherent right of self-government which this government is committed to.

In answer to my hon. friend's question, it is a three-in-one formula: self-determination, self-sufficiency and self-government within one Canada. We intend to proceed with fairness and in the healing process in the end we will have a better country.