

Oral Questions

Mr. Clark: I should like to ask him another question regarding his timetable. Now that the Prime Minister has had to take over the energy negotiations because of the failure of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, can he tell us what dates have been established—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: There is some shouting from the Liberal backbenchers. Can the Prime Minister tell us what date or dates have been established for the meeting between the Prime Minister, the Premier of Alberta, and no doubt subsequently with other premiers, so we can have a permanent agreement after the temporary extension expires at the end of this month?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, regarding statements on motions, I am sure various views can be entertained as to their usefulness, but my recollection is that when a statement on motions is made, it is generally said it does not answer the questions the opposition had in mind. For that reason opposition leaders find reason and justification to make long statements of their own, all of which takes the time of Parliament at a time when urgent legislation is necessary.

To avoid all this I thought it equally useful to indicate my willingness to answer questions. I have already answered several questions today on the subject of the Summit and I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will be able to ask a few questions.

There was a second part of the question, Madam Speaker, concerning energy negotiations. I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition that I have not, to use his words, taken over the energy negotiations. I have just returned from the Venice Summit and other meetings and I have not yet had an opportunity to discuss with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources the future timetable of these discussions.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has been so long out of practice in making statements on motions in this House that I gather he has forgotten their utility to the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I would remind him that we now have 29 days before the expiry of the second agreement on energy pricing. The country cannot wait forever for the Prime Minister to arrange his itinerary in order to fit in this little matter.

I wonder whether the Prime Minister could simply indicate that he understands the severity of the failure to agree, and can he confirm that unless there is agreement on a comprehensive energy program by the first of August, the development of a new oil sands plant, the Alsands plant, will be delayed by at least a year, at a cost of some 55,000 jobs right across this country.

● (1440)

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, on the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, I would suggest it is not quite fair to say that it is a matter of practice. Just a couple of weeks ago, after the first ministers' conference here in Ottawa I made a statement on motions, which was followed by statements on motions by the leaders of the opposition parties. I answered questions for over an hour! I believe that the whole process took close to two hours.

Therefore, it is possible to take this time in Parliament; but I hoped that, as some of the hon. member's colleagues did today, I would be asked to answer specific areas of concern to the opposition parties. I indicated that I was prepared to answer such questions.

With regard to the second part of the question, I would appreciate it if it were addressed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources who is handling this matter.

TRADE IMBALANCE WITH UNITED STATES—EFFECT ON STEEL AND AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRIES

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. The minister no doubt heard the Prime Minister indicate that in discussions with the President of the United States, the matter of the recent action by New York state as it affects the steel industry was not raised.

Is the minister aware that 16 states now have Buy American policies which detrimentally affect Canada; that 35 states have policies, legislative or otherwise, which detrimentally affect the purchase of Canadian products; that the Steel Company of Canada now suffers a deficit with regard to the purchase of raw materials as against the sale of finished products to the United States, and that we suffer from a \$1.3 billion deficit?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deans: Are you finished?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deans: Is it the intention of the minister to make representation to the U.S. governments, both state and federal, in an effort to correct the imbalances which presently exist and which cost Canadians jobs?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Madam Speaker, as usual, my hon. friend is rather late in raising this important subject; we have already been making such representations, and we will continue to do so.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rae: It has not had a lot of effect.

Mr. Deans: Madam Speaker, the minister has indicated that we are late. Can I assume that he will have the same degree of success in raising this matter as the minister had with the auto industry, mining industry, natural gas industry and pipeline