

And then the Premier of Ontario is telling us that we have let another sovereign country gain control not only over our resources and taxation policies but also, to a certain extent, over our employment and regional development policies, which is a dangerous precedent.

Somebody has suggested that the agreement can only encourage the United States to extend their protectionist measures to other sectors.

Or that natural resources constitute an absolute right which should not be abandoned to any foreign government.

The final argument is that even if Canada were to lose the case it would be well-advised to state its position immediately lest it might jeopardize our sovereignty for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, the comments and criticism I just mentioned went beyond the purely financial aspect and straight to the crux of the problem raised by this agreement, namely that Canada's sovereignty is at risk, and that from now on our American friends will be able to call the shots in this country, which is particularly dramatic in an industry that is of strategic importance to the Canadian economy, to the economy of the provinces and to local economies.

The Hon. Member's amendment is eminently reasonable and fair, and I think the Government has no choice here, if it was at all sincere and honest at the time when, in answer to the Opposition's comments about the sovereignty issue, it said: No, our sovereignty is not at stake. No, we will continue to manage this natural resource. No, the Americans will have no authority to intervene in the management of this resource. Mr. Speaker, if they were at all honest and sincere at the time, they could hardly object to the House adopting an amendment of this nature, because I think this is a perfectly reasonable proposal which would show that Canada intends to continue to be the master of its own house and to manage its own affairs like any sovereign country.

The Government is saying that they got back \$500 million which would otherwise have gone to our American friends. The point as such may or may not be acceptable, but it is not unreasonable.

But with respect to the question of sovereignty the only statements to which we were entitled were fuzzy, confused and ambiguous. I think that in the next few days we will see the true nature of the Government and find out whether Members over there really intend to show that Canadians are masters in their own home and can indeed lay claim to the autonomy which any sovereign country enjoys. Mr. Speaker, should the Government fail to accept this amendment it will reveal for everyone to see that it is altogether indifferent and could not care less about such indecent interference flowing from this agreement which allows our American friends to tell us what we should do, how we should plan, and what approach we should take with respect to so basic a natural resource as softwood lumber.

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act

As I see it, Mr. Speaker, it is altogether normal, reasonable, fair and equitable that the producers expect that money, collected from the producing provinces, to be spent in this area.

From my standpoint the amendment of my colleague is more than reasonable. I wanted to echo the views of others who spoke before me and express unqualified support for what seems to me to be more than reasonable. I sincerely hope that the Government will lay its cards on the table and agree to this amendment.

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● (1640)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

DESIGNATION OF ALLOTTED DAY

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that the Government will designate tomorrow as an allotted day.

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[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER PRODUCTS EXPORT CHARGE ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-37, an Act respecting the imposition of a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products, as reported (with an amendment) from a legislative committee.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): I heard the Hon. Member talking about calling the shots, and I think that is a very good point. Are we going to call the shots in this country or will they be called elsewhere, in Washington, for instance? The point is whether we are going to be masters in our own house or whether others are going to decide how we are going to run things. It is a matter of cultural and economic sovereignty.

[English]

It is strange that this question arises today. It seems to me that the cultural and economic sovereignty of Canada has been on our plate time and time again. The Government has not the courage to talk back to the Americans and say that we are who we are, that these are the things we stand for and this is what we believe in. An example is the film distribution Bill. That Bill has curried great favour and could be well received. If the Government only had the courage of its convictions, the film distribution Bill would be in the House today. This is as is