

Statements by Ministers

of us, as it was of them, that we left this Canada, this beloved country, a better place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, one of the first things our Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) did when he was sworn in as Leader of the country was to go down to the United States and tell our American friends: "Canada is open for business again". Today, the Prime Minister has put Canada up for sale.

All we have seen so far is a statement of principles, and we ask him: Where is the document? Indeed I received a copy of his remarks this morning as I was coming down to the House. All we have so far in this beautiful package put together by the Government is: "Canada-U.S. Trade Negotiations, A Chronology"; "Canada-U.S. Trade Negotiations, Glossary"; "Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, Elements of the Agreement"; and a synopsis.

Where is the document, or is it still being drafted, and is that why the Prime Minister has not been able to deliver anything but a vague series of generalities, stuffed with rhetoric, but no details for the Canadian people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): We want to tell him and the Government that Canadians will want to see the fine print. Canadians will want to examine this agreement, as well the House of Commons, clause by clause. We expect that to be done because we have a mystery here. We do not have a document. We do not have the agreement. Neither Parliament nor the Congress of the United States has anything officially before it.

[*Translation*]

All we have, Mr. Speaker, are summaries from both parties. We do not even have an official text. Most of our information—as was the case throughout these negotiations—comes from Washington, not from this Government. Where is the document? When do we get an opportunity to study the document? The Prime Minister did sign something, so where is the document? The Prime Minister wrote a blank cheque and I can assure him that we on this side of the House do not endorse this cheque.

Mr. Speaker, how can we be expected to debate a mystery in the House? How can we debate a document which may not even exist right now but which is being drafted? We must see the fine print. We must scrutinize it clause by clause.

[*English*]

Already we have major differences in interpretation on either side of the border as to what is in the agreement. We have differing interpretations from Washington and those emanating from the Government as to what the agreement actually means.

The Senate and the House of Representatives apparently do not have details. Naturally enough they will look at it in terms of their American interest and in terms of the United States Constitution.

We have an opportunity and an obligation, when we finally see the document, to look at it in terms of the Canadian interest and the Canadian future and, in particular, in terms of our sovereignty and independence as a nation.

The Government operated throughout these negotiations on the naive assumption that the very fact of an agreement with the United States would somehow magically exempt us from U.S. protectionist sentiment, particularly from the protectionist sentiment in the Congress and that somehow we would automatically be exempted from the United States Trade Law, 1974, and particularly from the omnibus Bill already passed by the Senate, passed by the House of Representatives, and now in conference between the two Houses.

• (1130)

That naive assumption would only have been borne out if two conditions had been met. First, if there has been a meaningful exemption from U.S. trade law and unilateral remedies that the Americans so effectively, from their point of view, exercised and imposed against us. But there was not. Second, what about a mechanism to enforce that exemption in terms of a dispute mechanism between the two countries? What about a binding mechanism to withstand the nature of the United States Constitution? But we are far from sure there is a mechanism. What we have is a dispute mechanism, not that will regulate disputes between Canada and the United States on an agreed definition of subsidy, on an agreed definition of countervail and anti-dumping, but a dispute mechanism, so far as we can read it in these vague generalities, these principles of agreement, which will apply national law on either side of the border. In other words, all this dispute mechanism will do is to apply American trade law against Canada. We have substituted an American tribunal for an international tribunal. American law will still apply to Canadian exports into the U.S. market. What the Prime Minister has given us today is an absolute fraud. There is no exemption from American trade law.

Take the case we all know negotiated so pitifully by the Minister of International Trade (Miss Carney), the softwood lumber case. There was final offer after final offer. We can remember that. Even though we suggested that the law and the facts had not changed, she yielded. That case, were it decided today, would be decided under the same legal principles. But instead of those principles being decided by the American administrative system, they will be decided by an international tribunal between Canada and the United States—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): —but applying American law. The law has not changed.