

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my comments to the question Your Honour has raised regarding how this prejudices the public interest. If one goes through *Hansard* over the last three or four days one would see that a large part of the debate, in fact the core, has centred on the impact that the Memorandum of Understanding, the agreement in effect, will have upon Canadian economic interests, sovereignty and other issues. The specific nature of the undertakings included in that agreement are absolutely essential to the debate.

We have only been able to debate agreements that we informally possessed; they were not part of the Bill. That is of particular importance because in Question Period yesterday, in answer to a question by the Hon. Member for Nanaimo—Alberni (Mr. Schellenberg), the Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney) indicated there was a problem as it related to Schedule B of the agreement. That did not include a list of products to which the primary tax would not apply. A number of secondary manufacturers of lumber products were severely affected by that fact. The only way the problem can be resolved is to renegotiate the agreement and to have it include the list.

The Minister said officials were now meeting in an attempt to resolve the problem. At last count we have 80 or 90 companies who are in a state of limbo. A tax is being collected which is 200 per cent or 300 per cent over and above what they expected, given the countervailing duty. The only way that can be corrected is if the Memorandum of Understanding is tabled so that they and we know what the law is. Not having it tabled, not knowing what is on the list, not knowing if the list is going to be changed, given the answer by the Minister yesterday, means those manufacturers, including several thousand workers and a large part of our value-added manufacturing, are in a state of uncertainty.

It is clear that the only way the Parliament of Canada can properly respond to the interests of those manufacturers is to ensure that we know exactly what is going to be included in that Memorandum of Understanding and the schedules attached to it. They will then know exactly what they are going to be taxed on and there will be no uncertainty.

There is also a much larger issue. There is a large number of people in the industry, as well as provincial Governments, who are asking questions for which there is presently no answer. How does the Memorandum of Understanding apply to them? In contacting various provincial officials to get their response, they say that at the last meeting when they asked to what extent does the \$600 million apply, no answers were forthcoming.

**Miss Carney:** That is not true.

**Mr. Axworthy:** There was no response. There was still a high level of ambiguity as to the meaning and interpretation and application of the Memorandum of Understanding. I make the case to you that the Memorandum of Understanding is not a clerical error. It is not a bagatelle or a side-show. It is

*Point of Order—Mr. Gray (Windsor West)*

essential to the functioning of this law. Not being part of the law and not having it in both languages means the law we are debating would be not only ambiguous but could also be unfairly applied and would put a number of companies and provincial Governments in a high state of uncertainty.

**Mr. de Corneille:** Point of privilege.

**Mr. Speaker:** A point of order has been raised. Unless something has happened to interrupt the orderly debate on that point of order I would like to carry on recognizing Members as they rise. A Member has said "point of privilege" and I would want to defer that unless the Member presses the point. We are on a point of order, but if the Hon. Member for Eglinton—Lawrence (Mr. de Corneille) has a point of privilege which has suddenly arisen and which is of great importance, of course, I will hear him.

**Mr. de Corneille:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether you would interpret it as a point of privilege or a point of order, but my privilege to be able to speak in the House and have access to documents it seems to me is also affected.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member for the intervention. I think it is on the same point of order. Has the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) completed his remarks at this time?

**Mr. Axworthy:** Yes.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to interrupt the flow of debate on this point of order, which is important. However, the question has arisen as to when the document was available in both official languages. That is a key point and I admit it. I am advised by officials in the Minister's office that the document was available in both official languages from the Minister's office on January 5, 1987. I have copies of the Minister's statement and—

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Was it tabled in the House?

● (1240)

**Mr. Lewis:** Parliament was not sitting on January 5, 1987. It was available in both official languages from the Minister's office on January 5, 1987. The question one must ask oneself is whether one asked for it.

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to address briefly the issue you raised with the House, that is, what prejudice the public would suffer if debate on this imperfect Bill were allowed to continue.

First, I observe that the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Lewis) tried to make a substantial argument to the effect that the gap in the Bill was simply of a clerical nature. I submit that the clerical nature of the error does not relieve in any way the extent of the transgression of the Standing Order.