

Oral Questions

Miss Carney: —in the sense that we have such a huge consultative mechanism, a mechanism that puts enormous pressure on the Cabinet and on the Ambassador and his colleagues.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, after listening to that reply, I, too, have sympathy for the chief negotiator. I think they both need a rest, Mr. Speaker.

PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): If I may, I should like to ask a further question of the Prime Minister.

He said, in response to the Leader of the Opposition, that he believes that it is absolutely essential that there be a major change in the trade remedy laws of the United States as part of any liberalized free trade agreement, and that he has indicated that kind of concern to the President on several occasions. I believe he has said that he has even written back to the President.

If, as part of the negotiations, the President replies and says that the United States is not prepared to make a major alteration and give Canada exemption to the trade remedy laws, is the Prime Minister prepared to pull away from those negotiations, recognizing that it would be a bad deal for Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is a very hypothetical question and, of course, it shall go unanswered. I can tell my hon. friend, however, that indeed it seems inconsistent to me, on the one hand, to profess a desire to seek a comprehensive free trade arrangement and also, if it were the case, to express the view that there should be retained the capacity for triggering unilateral reprisals against your trading partner with whom you would propose to sign the agreement.

To me it would have the effect, or could, depending, I suppose, on the approach and the wording, of vitiating the very notion of a free trade arrangement itself. And so we would want to examine all of this very carefully, as we are doing. It is part and parcel of a very complex negotiation which, notwithstanding some of the difficulties, is moving along quite well.

* * *

ENERGY

DOME PETROLEUM CORPORATION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister, in the absence of the Minister of Energy. There are three things happening today. First of all, the proposed takeover of Dome Petroleum by Amoco will be settled one way or the other today. Since none of the major creditors has agreed to it, that is almost certain to be a negative.

Secondly, the rescheduling of the debt for Dome by its major creditors terminates today, which will set in place, perhaps, a very unfortunate financial happening within a matter of weeks; and third, the Parliament of Canada will recess for the summer without the Government of Canada having taken any leadership to provide a solution to the Dome problem.

Given the earlier two events, that is, the termination of the rescheduling of the debt arrangement and the almost certain announcement that the Amoco deal has not been agreed upon, what is the current state of affairs affecting thousands of jobs, particularly in western Canada?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, let me draw the Hon. Member's attention to the fact that the negotiations between Dome and its bankers have been ongoing, I think, for something like five or six years. These deadlines have come and gone. It is part of the over-all negotiations.

I think, though, the Hon. Member should feel comforted by the fact that the international price of oil is up. That has put Dome in a healthier position. It has put it in a position where it is able to maintain better relations with its banks, thereby avoiding some of the problems to which the Hon. Member has just referred.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance knows that that soporific nonsense isn't a solution to the very serious problems of Dome and all of the thousands of jobs that are directly involved.

I would like to ask him—

An Hon. Member: What arrogance.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Since a CP wire story this morning has the Minister of Energy saying, about the Dome situation, that he is tired of Canadians seeing it as some kind of sporting event, and according to the Minister of Energy the Government has "a fundamental interest and responsibility in this", my question to the Minister is this. When is the Government going to live up to its responsibility, get the major players involved, including the chartered banks, including the management of Dome, to come in here, into Ottawa, and get a Canadian solution to this Canadian problem, before there is a disaster?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada does have a responsibility, and that is to respond to offers such as the one that Amoco has made for Dome to ensure that the conditions of the offer are consistent with the objectives of Investment Canada.

The Minister of Energy has stated quite clearly the list of those areas of Investment Canada that we are interested in as a Government, to ensure that any deal that is made will be for the benefit of all Canadians.