

that will directly benefit them? If the Minister is so confident, will he now put his money where his mouth is?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Hon. Member that this action was not taken with a great deal of pleasure on the part of the Government. I made that quite clear at the time the announcement was made last May. But we have a national problem, a problem that we felt necessitated a strong response to the Government of the United States in order to make it very clear that the protectionist actions it had undertaken were wrong and had to be dealt with. We took that action. We got our message very clearly through to Washington. If we had not taken strong action, I am sure the Hon. Member would be on his feet saying: "Why are you not taking the action? Why are you not showing the Americans that you are against this type of protection?" That is the reason why.

Mr. Penner: Rescind the tariff on Christmas trees.

Mr. Dingwall: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor.

REQUEST THAT TARIFF BE ABOLISHED

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, a Christmas tree war may be very amusing to the Minister of Finance. If he really believes that the message has gotten through clearly to the United States then why is he not prepared now to cut out that tariff and give security to these workers for the future?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to hear the two sides of the fence on which the Hon. Member plays the trade issue. On the one hand he says: "You guys better stand up to those Americans and hold firm on the Auto Pact and make sure you do some things that protect the sovereignty of Canada, because if you do not we are going to whip you and we are going to whip you hard". Then he turns around and says: "Roll over, Mike. Roll over and do those things that the Americans want you to do". On which side is the Hon. Member?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Essex-Windsor on a short question, please.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I have hoped for many years that the Minister would roll over and find some sensible—

• (1500)

Mr. Speaker: I have been hoping for some minutes that the Hon. Member would put his second question succinctly.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

Mr. Langdon: My supplementary question to the Minister is this. Since there has been so much discussion with reference to this issue, as he has outlined, why does he continue to defend what was a bad decision to start with and remains a bad decision, especially because it will lead to potential retaliation in the future?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have always said that the decision by the Americans to impose a tariff on shakes and shingles was a bad decision. The Hon. Member and I are in full agreement on that.

POSSIBLE ACTION BY UNITED STATES

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of any individual rolling over. The industry will roll over and be dead if action is not taken. I wonder if the Minister knows that in the first week of February the American Christmas Tree Association is meeting in Atlantic City, and it will start preparation for its retaliatory action against the massive importation of Canadian Christmas trees, \$30 million alone from Nova Scotia, against \$1 million of American Christmas trees that come into Canada.

Why has the Minister of Finance taken a national problem of shakes and shingles and levered and lumbered the Christmas tree industry of Atlantic Canada, particularly Nova Scotia?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: The Opposition wishes it could ask questions like that.

Mr. Benjamin: Say goodbye, Pat.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Nobody is going to say that was a planted question.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I cannot outdo you on that, and I will not even try.

That is probably the first good question that we have had in a long time.

Mr. Riis: Let's hear a good answer, Mike.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I will shortly be meeting with the representatives of the Christmas tree industry. I was supposed to be meeting with them two minutes ago, and I will leave right from the Chamber to meet with them. I am sure the matters that the Hon. Members have raised will be the subject of our discussion.

We are concerned about the possible actions that the United States may take. This is the very reason why we have taken the matter as forcefully as we have with the Americans, and why we are following through and trying to find a resolution of this matter.