

Oral Questions

The Government has now reached a final agreement with the United States on the final wording of the trade proposal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: I want to thank the Members opposite for their applause, Mr. Speaker. It is very thoughtful.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Thirty-two per cent and falling.

Mr. Broadbent: Will the Minister tell us when Members of the House will be able to see that report? When she answers that question will she, on behalf of the Government, guarantee that there will be adequate time to debate that report and resolution in the House? In addition, will she guarantee that there will be a vote taken before the Government of Canada signs this agreement with the United States?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, my officials advised me before Question Period that the officials on both sides are into the final details of the proof-reading.

Mr. Riis: We heard that three months ago.

Miss Carney: Again, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition asks questions but does not have time to hear the answers. They are against this report. They have not even read it. They do not even want to know when it is available. That shows the consistency of the NDP policy.

Mr. Broadbent: Give it to us so we can read it.

Mr. Fulton: Has she read it?

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I will try with the Prime Minister. The chairman of the House committee has said that the committee will not be reporting to the House based on the final wording. He said it would be "absolutely silly" to make an attempt to do that and that it would "make a mockery" of the whole issue.

Would the Prime Minister not agree that unless there is adequate time to debate and understand all the details involved, and to take a vote in the House of Commons, the Government would be absolutely silly to proceed and would be making a mockery of the importance of this question for the people of Canada?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the committee has already confirmed that the committee is free at any time to deal with any aspect of the report. Should it find that it is substantially different from the "Elements of the Agreement", which it is not, the committee is free at any time to pursue its own agenda on this issue.

With regard to the timing of the report, as I started to say earlier, we are expecting the tabling of the report by the end of the week. With regard to the timing of the debate, the Prime Minister has already assured us that there will be a debate. In view of the Hon. Member's enthusiasm for a debate, I suggest that his House Leader co-operate with the Government House Leader on the timing of it.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Minister that we will co-operate on the timing. However, the timing which is of interest to the people of Canada is that they have time to understand what this complex deal is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

REQUEST FOR DEBATE AND VOTE PRIOR TO SIGNATURE

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): I will direct my supplementary question to the Prime Minister. Witnesses from Vancouver in the West to St. John's, Newfoundland, in the East, including many witnesses who gave support in principle for the idea, pointed out the need to have time to study the final text.

Therefore, will the Prime Minister make a serious commitment to the principles of democracy, to the need to understand this document, and ensure that there will be adequate time in the House of Commons for a full debate and a vote on this before it is signed and becomes an official agreement with the United States, rather than rushing it through before Christmas?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered that question. The Prime Minister has repeatedly said that there will be a debate on this issue.

Mr. Broadbent: A vote?

Miss Carney: The timing and the nature of the debate will depend on the co-operation of the opposition Parties.

Mr. Broadbent: A three-day debate, right.

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HEALTH

TOXIC MUSSELS—TESTING DONE WITH MICE AND RATS

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. The Minister asked us earlier to stick with the facts. I suggest that if the Minister had stuck with the facts in this whole debate and during Question Period in the last few days, he would not have the problems he has today. Also, he would not have had the contradiction that he had with Dr. Todd as shown on television last evening.