

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could limit myself to the final comment of my right hon. friend in regard to secrecy.

Surely he will acknowledge that there has been extensive consultation, and probably an unprecedented sharing of information among Canadians on this very vital topic.

Mr. Gauthier: Where are you living?

Mr. Mulroney: Most recently there was a seven and a half hour meeting with the First Ministers involved in this.

Mr. Axworthy: What about the other 25 million?

Mr. Mulroney: There has been a continuing committee of Ministers and officials who have met on a regular basis.

To the best of my knowledge, all of the Premiers have commented very favourably on the extent to which information was shared, and is in the process of being shared, with industry, and with the provinces. There has been a debate in this House. We offered a confidential briefing to the Leader of the Opposition on all aspects, every conceivable aspect of trade, but he turned it down.

Mr. Gauthier: How about the deadline? Answer the deadline question.

Mr. Mulroney: The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition was choosing to score political points rather than to be concerned about the national interest. I think that indicates everything we have done—

Mr. Gauthier: You have been cut off.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry.

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, now we know why the Prime Minister needs all those shoes—he is up on his toes dancing so often that we cannot get a straight answer.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry would keep his preamble to the facts needed to place his question to the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Axworthy: I will make my question very short. The Prime Minister did not answer the previous question. My question is the following.

In the counter proposal that has been forwarded to the Americans, is the Government of Canada asking for an extension of the October 5 deadline? In other words, are we asking the United States to give us more time to try to work out this deal, or are we finally going to cut bait and say that the deal is no good and we should get out?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): First, Mr. Speaker, we have not forwarded a counter proposal to the Americans. Second, we are not asking for an extension, and third, you do not have to worry about my shoes because we will put the boots to you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, according to a publication from the Prime Minister's former press secretary, he has already tried and failed.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy: We will wait for the publication of the book.

I want to return to the issue at hand. The Prime Minister said that we did not make a counter proposal, but in Question Period today he said, "but we are waiting for an American response". What is he waiting for a response to if he did not make a counter proposal? Why is it that even the Americans are confused? The spokesman for the trade negotiator's office says, "I do not know what this means." Is it consultation or negotiation? That is the same question Canadians are asking. What is the Government trying to do, is it consulting, negotiating or grovelling on its knees?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend says the Americans are confused. Perhaps that is the case. The Americans we have been speaking with on behalf of the Government of Canada, Secretary Baker and Ambassador Yeutter, are certainly not confused. They know the position of the Government of Canada. It has been clearly expressed by the Minister of Finance and the Minister for International Trade and it presumably is in the process of being considered by the American Government at which appropriate time I suppose there will be a response. However, they also know and have known from the very beginning that if the Government of Canada deems that matters are not acceptable, there shall be no deal. We have said this from the very beginning.

CULTURE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, throughout the trade talks with the United States, the Prime Minister has continually promised to keep our cultural industries and assistance for regional development off the bargaining table. Now we have reports that the United States wants complete freedom in our cultural sector and severe restrictions on regional development aid as the price for a binding dispute settlement mechanism.

Point blank, will the Prime Minister tell us is the United States now seeking concessions on cultural industries and regional development and will this Government, despite its earlier promises, discuss these points?