

in Ohio, just some 50 miles south of the Canadian border, will the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister advise the House whether, since the allegations were made public, we have had discussions with the United States specifically about the matter?

Will he also advise the House if the Canadian Government feels confident that we can rely on the word of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to protect the welfare of Canadian citizens, in light of the allegation that they have covered up the situation in recent weeks?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Hudon (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to that question on behalf of the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Clearly, Canadians are increasingly concerned with nuclear issues, and since the Chernobyl accident especially those concerns have been increasing.

Mr. Speaker, I have checked and it has been proven that officials from the Department of External Affairs have made known to the US Department our concerns in that respect, and we are expecting reports on that incident or allegations.

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[English]

TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS—POSTPONEMENT OF FIRST MINISTERS' MEETING

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. His office confirmed this morning that the scheduled meeting of First Ministers to discuss Canada-U.S. free trade negotiations has been postponed several weeks into July.

It is a surprising development considering that negotiators on both sides have indicated that major political decisions must be taken by the end of the month on crucial matters such as investments, subsidies, services, and others.

Does the postponement for several weeks of these meetings indicate that the Government of Canada intends to go it alone and make these decisions on crucial issues without active involvement with or consultation by the provincial Premiers so that they will be able to determine and indicate what is their stand on these very vital matters in the negotiations?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker, not at all; quite the contrary.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONSULTATION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is so forthcoming, perhaps he is prepared to tell us why it is the meetings were delayed so long

and why decisions will be made in the negotiations involving these major issues without the involvement of the First Ministers of the provinces.

Is it an example of the new federalism about which the Prime Minister is talking, that matters involving crucial issues affecting the provinces will be undertaken without their consultation or involvement?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if my hon. friend is referring to the new federalism whereby the Auto Pact was negotiated without so much as a by your leave of the Government of Ontario under the previous Government, then of course we are doing things quite differently. There is a much greater degree of consultation, as my hon. friend knows.

He says: "Why has the meeting been delayed so long?" It has not been delayed so long. It has been rolled over for a couple of weeks, simply because the Americans have yet to respond in concrete terms to a number of very important issues put forward by Canada.

In the absence of any kind of specific response on these matters, it was felt prudent to await their tabling of answers in the coming days so that we can then seize the First Ministers with tangible realities as opposed to opinions which sometimes come from the newspapers and via the newspapers.

I think my hon. friend would agree that a postponement, even of modest duration, in the circumstances would be extremely prudent and helpful not only to the negotiations but to the consultative process involving the First Ministers.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

COST OF ACQUIRING NUCLEAR-POWERED SUBMARINES

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of National Defence my question is for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. It concerns the proposed purchase of nuclear-powered submarines.

I should like the Prime Minister to explain to the people of Canada how his Government expects to pay under \$500 million each for nuclear-powered submarines for which the Royal Navy today, in 1987, is paying \$530 million?

In the White Paper it is proposed that the purchase of our submarines would be over a 10-year period. What would the price be over the 10-year period? What is the estimated price?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of National Defence has pointed out, the anticipated price is about 1.6 times the cost of conventional submarines. We stand by those figures. They are not wild guesses. They are not inaccurate. The person quoted in the newspaper happened to be a consultant employed by DND on conventional submarines.