

Oral Questions

will be any options or concessions on volume or price for Canadian softwood to be put to those envoys should that process proceed?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I can advise the hon. gentleman, as I did earlier in this morning's debate, that it is not the practice or habit of the Government to make any decisions affecting the provinces without fully involving them. That is our practice and we will continue it.

CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS—INVOLVEMENT OF ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy—Royal): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade as well. Now that it is assured that the long awaited talks on enhanced trade are going ahead, good news indeed for Canada, will the Minister assure the House, and particularly Atlantic Canadians, that no longer will the Government tolerate a second-class status for Atlantic Canada?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to answer that question. Certainly we would afford nothing but first-class status to the Atlantic provinces, as we would to all provinces in Canada. I can certainly remind all Members of the House that, indeed, a number of the chairmen of the Sectoral Advisory Committees on Trade who will assist us in these negotiations come from the Maritimes.

LUMBER EXPORTS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade. The Prime Minister, speaking in the House of Commons on April 24, 1986, in denying that there would be a separate deal made on lumber with the United States, said that the President of the United States said that negotiations would begin without conditions and that that is also the position of the Government of Canada. Why is the Government of Canada now proposing to make a separate deal, a precondition, that will limit the export of some \$3 billion worth of Canadian softwood to the United States in advance of the beginning of any free trade talks? What has changed?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): For the life of me, Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the Hon. Member is getting his information. I can tell the House, as has the Prime Minister, and as the President of the United States has said publicly, that there were in fact no preconditions to the start of these talks. None exist, and I just do not know where he is getting that information. Perhaps he could enlighten me in that area.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, is it not true that the Government of Canada, in conjunction with the Government of the United States and

specifically President Reagan, made a commitment to the Senate Finance Committee three weeks ago, and particularly to Senator Packwood, to resolve U.S. complaints about the Canadian export of softwood lumber by limiting that export in order to acquire U.S. Senate Finance Committee support for the start of free trade talks? Is that not true?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is that it is not true. The Prime Minister has never made a commitment of any such nature to the Senate and we have never made a commitment to the President or anyone else to limit the exports of our lumber to the United States.

DRUG PATENT LAW AMENDMENTS

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same Minister. Last night CBC news reported that the drug patent law changes will be presented to Parliament this Friday. Will the Minister now admit that this is part of the price which Canada has agreed to pay to get the free trade talks going and approved by the U.S. Senate Committee?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I would hope that in the future the Hon. Member would not rely upon the CBC for his information. I can only repeat what I said earlier, which is that there were and are no preconditions to the commencement of trade talks between Canada and the United States.

CANADA-UNITED STATES DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, in that case let me ask the Minister a direct question. At any stage in the discussions with respect to the Senate's approval process were there discussions between Canadian and American officials with respect to patent law changes? Is the Minister denying that such discussions ever took place?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, again I can only reply to the hon. gentleman by saying that there were no preconditions whatsoever in any area for the commencement of talks between Canada and the United States with respect to a comprehensive trade agreement.

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SHIPYARDS

INQUIRY WHETHER GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO CLOSE CANADIAN VICKERS LIMITED SHIPYARD IN MONTREAL EAST

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Small Businesses and concerns shipyards in Quebec. Could the Minister confirm to the House that his Government, with