

Unlike the two old time parties, the New Democrats believe Canadians deserve a fair tax system. Our plan should raise revenue for necessary government investment in services without overtaxing working Canadians. It would help to provide proper incentives to stimulate the economy.

Providing a special tax which helps only the wealthiest of families in Canada is wrong. It is time for a fair tax system for all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

TRADE

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister for International Trade, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister. We have been informed that the government intends to present the bill on the North American free trade agreement tomorrow, although parallel negotiations with the United States and Mexico are not to begin until next month.

Could the Acting Prime Minister tell the House why they are in such a hurry, when the American government does not intend to proceed with legislation until it has obtained parallel accords on the environment and employment?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, Canada and the United States have begun the legislative process on the parallel accords. We have opportunities to discuss the parallel accords with the Americans and the Mexicans. This process is to begin in mid-March and I think that both processes will proceed at the same time and may not end until the summer.

[English]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, why is the government in such a rush to table a bill that obviously will be amended? In his statement last week the President confirmed to the Congress what Mr. Kantor had said before, that they would not proceed unless they had agreements on manpower and the environment.

Oral Questions

Why would the government like the House of Commons to pass the bill right now when we all know that there will be changes? If there are no changes the Americans will not proceed and we will have lost all our bargaining chips at the table.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. friend must realize that all three countries have signed the North American free trade agreement. What my hon. friend is talking about is what will be the components of the parallel accords.

The free trade agreement itself will be legislated by all three countries as it was signed last December. There may be some variation in what the different countries would like to see in the parallel accords. That process, as I said, will commence in the middle of March and it will proceed in parallel with the work that is going on in legislating the agreement.

• (1420)

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a supplementary question to the minister.

The minister is admitting that there will be some negotiations starting next month. Last week he suggested that we should have a North American environmental commission to deal with the problems of the environment. He realized that there was a change in the position of the Americans because there was a change in the administration in the United States.

In Canada there is a very good chance that before this bill is approved by the Americans there will be a change in government here and that will change the policies.

Would it not be fair, in the fifth year of its mandate, for the government to slow down a bit and wait to see what the Canadian people will decide about the government? If you are elected you will go all the way, but we know that you will not be elected and there will be some major changes to this deal.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the drool coming out of the corners of my hon. friend's mouth is not becoming of him. He is not going to win the next election. He will not have an opportunity, as he says, to renegotiate the agreements.