

Oral Questions

In these ridiculous circumstances why does the Government not submit this trade deal to the Canadian people and let them decide if this is what they want for Canada?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the U.S. legislation is being tabled in Congress today and that it is proceeding as people in the Congress and the administration indicated it would. I only wish I could say that the Hon. Member who speaks for the opposition Party recognizes that the same kind of process should apply to legislation in this House. However, that is not the point of the opposition—and one could hardly say the “Loyal Opposition” any more. Nevertheless—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Loyal to the Senate.

Mr. Speaker: I remind the Hon. Minister that she cannot say the contrary either. I know she will want to withdraw that.

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the new slogan of the Liberal Party is “Let the Senate decide”. “Let the Senate decide on trade legislation”. Now I suppose it is “Let the Senate decide on child care”. “Let the Senate decide on the major issues before this country”. It is a complete abdication of responsibility.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, if the Canadian people were to decide in an election that they want this trade deal, the Senate will respect their view.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Allmand: The Government is afraid to submit this deal to the Canadian people because it knows it cannot be supported.

TERMS OF CANADIAN LEGISLATION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, Article 8 in our Bill, contrary to the American Bill, provides that the free trade agreement will take precedence over all other Canadian law, including regional development law, agricultural law, fisheries law, environmental law, trade adjustment law, employment equity law, and so on. That places the free trade agreement next to the Constitution and only the Constitution in importance, and this is a major change in our country.

Why does the Government not let the people decide in an election if they want that kind of major change for this country?

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): First, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member's preamble is totally wrong. Section 8 pertains only to legislation affected by the free trade agreement, not all legislation as the Hon. Member would like to pretend.

• (1425)

I remind the Member that Section 8 is included in the safe transportation of goods legislation brought in by his Government. It is also in the Cree-Naskapi Act, the James Bay Indian Act, and the Western Grain Transportation Act. I have a list of Acts in which it is included. It is used in Canadian law quite frequently. The Hon. Member cannot stand up and mislead this House with that kind of inaccurate information.

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CHILD CARE

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Ms. Marion Dewar (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Youth who is responding on the child care legislation. The Minister of National Health and Welfare told the Senate committee studying child care that the Government would augment provinces' child care expenses up to 90 per cent of the national average.

This Bill clearly states that the Government will pay only up to 70 per cent of the expenses need to reach the national average. Why has the Government again broken its promise to the people of Canada?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport)): Mr. Speaker, it was with great pride that the Government introduced in the House today for the first time legislation on day care. This \$6.4 billion package over a seven-year period is a substantial commitment to the issue of day care for all Canadian families.

I hope that the Hon. Member will assist in its rapid passage through the House in order that it can also be put through the Senate as rapidly as possible.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Ms. Marion Dewar (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the Government has consistently said that it would bring in a child care strategy program. This legislation has no national standards or national objectives. The Government has gone back on its word with regard to the 90 per cent topping up.

Why did the Minister of National Health and Welfare decide to change the topping up from 90 per cent to 70 per cent and break his promise to the Canadian people?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport)): Mr. Speaker, the legislation provides a 50-50 cost sharing of operating costs of commercial and non-profit agencies, a 75-25 cost sharing of capital cost of non-profit agencies during the period ending March 31, 1995, and, finally, a top-up to certain provinces based on national average entitlement per child care formula. That is what the legislation contains.