

Ministry is looking after the interests of the consumer in this issue is for him to resign.

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, for all the days that the questions relating to this issue have been put forward, I have answered those questions time after time.

Ms. Copps: You never answered.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): As again today, the Hon. Member is throwing forward falsehoods—

Ms. Copps: Facts.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): She is throwing forward allegations.

Ms. Copps: Facts.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Her word in the public has been tested against mine. Mine has been found to be truthful. Her's stands as naked, and as empty, and as and wrong.

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TRADE

CANADA-U.S. FREE TRADE AGREEMENT—AREAS OF PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice. There has just been completed a First Ministers' meeting in which the Prime Minister made it very clear that he intended to push ahead as strongly as possible with all areas of jurisdiction, all areas of legislation under the free trade arrangement with the United States.

What has happened to the Prime Minister's promise of 1985 that every province would be with him with respect to areas of their jurisdiction or they would not proceed in spite of opposition?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the question of the Hon. Member. It gives me an opportunity to remind all of us that there has been, I suppose, unprecedented consultation with the provinces concerning this very important transaction.

The Prime Minister has met with the First Ministers of all our provinces and has gone through detailed background briefing consultation no less than 10 times. This is totally unprecedented in federal-provincial relations.

Oral Questions

I do not accept the premise of the Hon. Member's question. All I can say is that I am satisfied with the constitutional authority which the federal Government has. I think the Hon. Member would be the first to agree that we have that power. As I think emanated from the meeting yesterday, there is a sense of yes, we can sit around and discuss the matters before us; yes, we can settle these in a Canadian way. That is the way I would like to see this matter resolved and that is the way I think it will be resolved.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, we have seen this Government boast about its capacity to pull together all the provinces in the case of Meech Lake.

Why in this case is it considered possible to go forward with such a widespread, detailed and deep incursion into provincial jurisdiction despite the opposition of at least three provinces in this country? Why is that considered possible and legitimate?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Again, the Hon. Member is quite right, Mr. Speaker. I think it is pretty well unprecedented that the Prime Minister and the Government have been able to find unanimity with respect to constitutional amendment as represented by the Meech Lake Agreement.

We rejoice that there has been such progress. This has not always been the case in Canada. We have tried to develop consensus on all major issues, and I think we have succeeded in doing that with free trade.

Mr. Langdon: Where is the consensus?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I remind the Hon. Member that the history and the precedent in this country have been quite the contrary. The federal Government has acted unilaterally concerning trade matters. I am reminded that in 1947 the Right Hon. Mackenzie King sent some public servants to negotiate the GATT at Geneva. There was no prior consultation with any province or with any other level of government. The political input was minimal. The officials returned. The matter was then accepted by the federal Government and signed on its behalf. A debate only took place on the floor of the House of Commons—I believe my colleague the Deputy Prime Minister will confirm this—some months after, maybe a year after the matter had transpired. Never were the provinces consulted. The Hon. Member will understand how far we have gone ahead from that point of view. We have a great deal for Canada and I know the Member will join us in supporting it across the country.

Mr. Speaker: The next will be the last question in Question Period. The Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques.