

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act

Speaker, when she was given her portfolio the quarterback, the Prime Minister, said: "I have given her the ball. Watch her run." Well, the Government of Canada was on the goal line. All it had to do was go over the goal line to score the touchdown. Yet what did the Minister for International Trade do? She fumbled on the goal line. She could not even hang on to the ball. She stood up in the House and said to the people of Canada: "I will fight tooth and nail for Canadian interests. We have made an offer and it is our final offer". Just a day or two later she said: "Well, we made another offer and it is our final offer". Like the Government and like the Prime Minister the Minister for International Trade suffers from a credibility problem. Perhaps it was as a result of being in the sun in Hawaii while she was basking on the beach, eating pineapple and sipping margaritas and pina coladas. Perhaps the sun penetrated the Minister and did some damage in terms of her credibility.

The so-called deal was announced on December 30. It was the Minister's new year's resolution—I note that you are indicating to me, Madam Speaker, that my time has expired. However unfortunate that may be, given the fact that I do have other comments to make, I say in conclusion to my colleagues who are hanging their heads in shame during these most difficult times the following. I can understand why they are shell-shocked and worried about their political futures. I say to them that if they want to regain some support and respect from Canadians then they must do the honourable thing and vote against Bill C-37.

Mr. Boudria: May I ask a question of the Hon. Member with the unanimous consent of the House, Madam Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Madam Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the debate thus far. I suppose one can get the impression from what has been said that the Government avoids as much as possible causing difficulties for our neighbours to the south. I wish to take note of a fact that has been revealed to us, that is, the Americans are having considerable difficulty as a result of the Conservative Government with respect to determining where the additional star in the Stars and Stripes will be placed.

● (1640)

I rather like and enjoy many members of this Government. There is a certain naivety that characterizes the government side. I could say that this Government is divided into two classes: the naive and the knaves. When all the court cases and investigations are over, all of the knaves will be eliminated and only the naive will be left.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) was heard to say yesterday that he is from Missouri. I do not know what part of Missouri he is from. I understand that if someone says they are

from Missouri, they are likely to be pretty tough to deal with; they are not likely to be fooled by Yankee traders. This Government has been consistently fooled by Yankee traders. In Bill C-37 and the softwood issue, we are only dealing with part of the fabric of interactions between this Government and the Americans, and this has caused a great deal of concern among the Canadian people.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) indicated that when we see the great ineptitude of this Government in dealing with the United States on trade issues, we are filled with the fear of God about what may happen if, indeed, the Auto Pact was denied to be on the table what would they place upon the table. In looking at the particular instance of the softwood lumber issue, we must be deeply concerned. The issue of countervail against Canadian softwood lumber came up previously, as did other matters to do with lumber. There was the problem over shakes and shingles against which a countervail was imposed. I observed at that time that the words "shake" and "shingle" were the vernacular for a neurological disease and the symptoms thereof, and reflected on the rather nervous way in which the Government has approached issues involving negotiations with the United States.

Referring back to the 1983 decision, Canada won because it had a good case. If the Government had the courage of its earlier words, we would have won again. I wish to remind the House of those earlier words. "We will fight this all the way. Today it is lumber, tomorrow it will be any number of issues". That was stated by the Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney), and she was certainly correct. Indeed, if we fold as we have folded on this matter, then it is only a matter of time before similar issues will arise with respect to other trade relationships, or other products traded with the United States.

Clearly with the terrible surge of protectionism in the United States, it will regard what we produce and how we produce it very closely, and it will discover subsidies almost everywhere. It is a nation under attack on trade, in large measure because of its own action, mismanagement of its economy, and its own inefficiencies. It is clear in the Americans' trade relationships with Canada that the moment Canadians, or indeed any other nation, begin to compete effectively with them, it tries to search out means of retaliation.

In this particular instance, it was argued by the Americans that the stumpage fees in parts of this country were too low and constituted a subsidy. After an initial threat of a countervail of some 35 per cent, they settled on 15 per cent by virtue of the initial ruling.

Laying that fact aside for the moment, it could be argued that the softwood lumber transported to the border experiences a railway subsidy. If we examine the matter carefully, one could discover a number of areas where the Americans, in their absolutely relentless search to find excuses for their own poor performance, will find with respect to lumber that there are subsidies all over the place that need to be countervailed.