

Oral Questions

own right, who advances the cause of women in Canada and whose least concern is the "pretty" girls alluded to by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

TRADE

STATUS OF CANADA-UNITED STATES TALKS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade said last night that there has been some movement in the American position on free trade. Canadians would be interested in knowing about that. They would be even more interested in knowing whether there has been any Canadian movement on its position in the negotiations with the United States, particularly on the issues of subsidies and our culture.

The Government has virtually destroyed the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion. It has weakened the whole issue of regional subsidies. The Government has already sold most of our book publishing industry to the Americans and yielded and withdrawn, apparently, a film distribution policy in the face of American pressure.

What movement has there been on the part of the Americans? And what concessions has Canada been prepared to make by way of a counter proposal?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in regard to the comments of my right hon. friend, the quite careless comments about regional economic expansion, I would point out to him something that he cares to neglect, that in all regions of the country, particularly those far removed from the centre, there has been a decrease in unemployment since this Government came to office, in all of the regions of this country, relative to the figures that were in place on September 17, 1984.

The 907,000 new jobs created in Canada is an important figure. The OECD report indicating that Canada's economy is growing at the top rate of all 24 members of the OECD is, I think, an important reflection of what we have been trying to do for the last three years as well. Trade, of course, is an important component of that, in all of its facets.

The Minister for International Trade indicated quite properly that there had been some movement on the important principle of dispute settlement. There has not been, however, agreement on the rules that might govern this mechanism. This is what is presently being considered. If, at an appropriate time, we receive an acceptable response from the Americans in this important area, I will be happy to advise my right hon. friend.

[Translation]

ISSUE OF MECHANISM TO SETTLE CANADIAN-AMERICAN DISPUTES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, such sectors as culture and regional grants contribute to the definition of Canada's very essence, and I believe that Canadians ought to know the position of the Government of Canada in these negotiations. The Prime Minister indicated there has been some movement with respect to the matter of a dispute settlement mechanism between both countries.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House whether his Government continues to insist, as do most Members of the House, that such a mechanism be binding and coupled with a significant exemption from the United States' unilateral right to slap countervailing duties and taxes on Canadian exports?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the initiatives we took in Northern Ontario, in Western Canada and, more recently, in the Atlantic region—commitments in excess of \$1 billion—indicate to what extent the Government is intent on minimizing regional disparities. That is one of the major thrusts of the Government's national policy.

As to the second point raised by my Hon. friend concerning the mechanism, yes, we feel it is an important mechanism to settle disputes which might break out between our two countries as a result of the possible implementation of a free trade agreement. It seems normal to us that an impartial mechanism be available to enable both parties to settle their own disputes, should these occur after the possible negotiation of a more comprehensive agreement. This is the position I had announced practically from the outset, and our current efforts to achieve it attest to unfailing consistency on our part.

• (1425)

[English]

DEADLINE FOR CONCLUSION OF TALKS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Government's recent demonstration of its desperation for a deal—

Mr. de Cotret: Oh, come on!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):—and the Government's secrecy throughout these entire negotiations, particularly at this crucial point in these negotiations, prompts me to ask the Prime Minister how long will this whole process go on.

Is the deadline of this weekend a firm deadline, or will the Prime Minister ask for an extension of that deadline to continue the talks?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!