

States. Will the Government assure us that any free trade agreement entered into with the U. S. will contain clauses explicitly banning the use of countervail duties against Canadian goods?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, countervail is very much at the heart of these negotiations. That is one of the reasons why we are seeking to enter into negotiations with the United States. I thought that was well understood.

[Translation]

FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNITED STATES—
COUNTERVAILING DUTIES

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, the Government cannot refuse to shed light on its position on the use of countervailing duties by the United States.

Again I want to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs: Is the position of the Canadian Government such as to let the United States levy countervailing duties in retaliation under a free trade agreement with our country? It is a basic question to which we must have an answer.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, questions related to countervailing action are an essential aspect of the negotiations. It is a negotiable question. It was made clear from the outset and the situation has not changed.

● (1420)

[English]

UNITED STATES PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, that is the basic point. To let the U.S. continue threats of countervailing duties while the talks are going on is like permitting war to continue while you are discussing a cease-fire.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Langdon: Let me put the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Question, please.

Mr. Langdon: They may not like the fact but it is real. Is the Minister aware of the letter President Reagan sent to the Senators whose support he got last week in which he made a commitment to countervailing action? Is the Minister prepared to say to the President what he has just said to the House, that countervailing action is at the heart of negotiations and should not be used while the talks are taking place?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the letter. From what the Hon. Member has said I do not think he could have read it. Regarding the other part of his question, let me paraphrase

Oral Questions

that well-known American philosopher and tell the Hon. Member that a negotiation "ain't over 'til it's over".

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, a war is not over until it's over either.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langdon: That is what you are not discussing. This is not a clean launch; it is a scorched-earth launch the Government has taken us into.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT LODGE PROTEST

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, given that these threats will continue, will the Government protest to President Reagan and attempt to get a clear commitment from him that threats of countervailing action will not be made against our producers during the long period of negotiations?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if we could stop the threat of countervailing action before the negotiations, there would be no need for negotiations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I do not know what kind of dream world the Hon. Member and the NDP inhabit. In the real world we are faced with some very serious threats, including countervailing action, from the U.S. We intend to seek trade arrangements which will provide Canadians guarantees against some of those threats. That is what a negotiation is about.

The NDP, for ideological reasons, have been against progress to secure Canadian jobs from the outset. If they want to take that position, that is fine. However, they should not dwell in this cloud-cuckoo-land which has characterized their thinking.

Mr. Langdon: What has happened is that the Government has attempted to obscure this whole question throughout.

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is as follows: Will the Government now admit that it is not a flawless beginning, but a beginning fraught with mistakes?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we are—and I apologize for the quality of my French from High River—but we are engaged in negotiations without preconditions so as to achieve concrete benefits for Canadians.