

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that Parliament has already been informed on many aspects of what is going on. Parliament knows for example that culture is not on the table. Parliament knows for example that the objectives of the Canadian government remain absolutely unchanged from what they were when we went into this.

I think Parliament knows exactly what we have to know at the moment.

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Prime Minister.

Last week, the Minister for International Trade gave Canadians the assurance that all three governments felt the talks should last as long as was necessary to achieve results that would benefit all parties. That is what the minister said before the parliamentary committee.

In Mexico, however, he told reporters that he wanted an agreement before April 1992, to avoid making it an election issue in Canada. What is the correct version: what he told reporters in Mexico or what he told Canadians before the parliamentary committee?

[*English*]

**Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science):** Mr. Speaker, what the minister said in Mexico was that we expected to be able to make some significant progress between now and March. We might even have a kind of draft arrangement by that time.

Obviously you do not want to drag negotiations on any longer than necessary. That is exactly our position and will remain so.

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, what the minister said in Mexico was that he wanted to avoid a political debate. Canadians have a right to know what is going on with respect to the auto pact, environment, Maquiladora zones, energy, rules of origin, national treatments, subsidies, health standards, dumping, human rights, intellectual property, textiles and dispute settlement.

What is going on and why are you keeping Canadians in the dark on this important issue?

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member knows that she should not be referring personally to a minister.

**Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science):** Mr. Speaker, no one wants to avoid a major political discussion of any North American free trade agreement.

What you want to ensure, however, is that you can get the discussion going properly so that when you have the upcoming American election in 1992 you can have this discussion without being clouded by an American election, not a Canadian election.

**Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk):** Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up this issue with the Prime Minister.

I attended the external affairs committee hearings last Wednesday when the minister said: "Negotiations should take as long as required". There was no deadline at that time. Now the minister is singing a different tune in Mexico.

Why is the minister saying one thing at the negotiating table and telling another thing to Parliament?

**Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is not saying one thing in Mexico and another thing here. He has been absolutely consistent throughout this whole thing.

Clearly you would like to have negotiations completed as soon as possible, but if it takes a longer time then that is exactly what has to happen.

**Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk):** Mr. Speaker, again my question is for the Prime Minister.

The standing committee report said that this Parliament and the Canadian people should be consulted. Why is the minister not consulting Canadians? Where are the studies? Where are the cost benefit studies? Don't the workers in Canada have a right to know how this deal will affect their lives?

**Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member forgets that in this negotiation, as in other negotiations, the government has a wide variety of advisory committees on this issue. When there is something that we have agreed upon then that comes to Parliament. Of course it comes to Parliament.