

Oral Questions

all Members would want me to echo what an Hon. Member has just expressed, namely, our gratitude to the pages for all their dedicated work during the session. We wish them well in their careers. I extend the same to all Members of the Chamber on both sides of the House.

My question is directed to the Prime Minister. It concerns the escalating public feud between his Minister for International Trade and the chief trade negotiator, Simon Reisman. In a somewhat garbled metaphor given to the Vancouver *Sun*, the Minister accused Mr. Reisman of going too far in seeking the biggest deal he can. Mr. Reisman, in his characteristically subdued fashion, has responded to the Minister by admitting that there have been tense moments between himself and his Minister.

The Prime Minister said yesterday of this dispute: "There are, and there should be, differences of opinion on different aspects of the file". I submit to the Prime Minister that on a file of this magnitude, and of this high level of government service, a mandate so critical for the future of Canada, there is no room for this kind of public feuding between the two senior officials in charge of the dossier. Why has the Prime Minister not settled this public dispute? If the negotiations are in such disarray right at the top of Canada's team, why does he not call the whole thing off and regroup?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my right hon. friend is of course quite right when he refers to the complexity of these negotiations. This is an enormous burden and a great challenge for the negotiator, even one of the tremendous talents of Ambassador Simon Reisman, aided, supported and guided as he is by a tremendous Minister, the Minister for International Trade.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: Both of these very devoted Canadians carry great responsibilities in a very complex and difficult area, made no less easy every day by constant sniping and attacks from members of the Opposition who seem to believe that they are favouring the American rather than the Canadian position in this matter. That has added to the burdens of both people principally responsible.

They would both be less than human if, in a matter of this complexity and this seriousness, from time to time there were not modest differences of opinion on given aspects of the file. But I can tell my right hon. friend—I can assure him and reassure him—that apart from the obvious competence with which the matter has been handled great harmony prevails.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I bet, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that the Prime Minister use his celebrated negotiating skills, first to introduce the Minister to Mr. Reisman once again, and then bring them together.

[Translation]

REPORTS TO PREMIERS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Mr. Reisman indicated that at the First Ministers' Conference, the provincial premiers, would, in his own words, receive "a fairly complete report" of the negotiations, but not necessarily on the details of the negotiations or on items such as a draft agreement.

Will the Prime Minister ensure that the provincial Premiers receive a report on the issues, a full report, and when does he intend to give Members the same information that U.S. Congressmen and Senators receive from their negotiators on a regular basis?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I don't know what kind of information is passed on to U.S. Congressmen, but I can inform you that meetings with their negotiators are less frequent than the meetings held by Ambassador Reisman with the Minister and their colleagues at the provincial level, as has already been pointed out by each of the premiers.

In almost every case, the information received is complete, and there is a high degree of satisfaction with the way negotiations are proceeding, especially in terms of the involvement of the provinces.

As for the meeting with the premiers, I can give my friend the assurance that the premiers will receive a full report on all negotiations.

[English]

POSITION OF UNITED STATES PRESIDENT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I hope that is true. I submit to the Prime Minister that the Members of the House deserve a report as well, at least to bring us up to speed with respect to being able to assess these negotiations in a fashion similar to that of the leading members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives who are receiving reports from their negotiator. We are completely in the dark. The Prime Minister wonders from time to time why he gets the reaction he does—it because we are not able to evaluate what is going on.

Last week the Prime Minister said and admitted that he had received a letter—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Oh, oh!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): We are hearing from the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead. We will get to him in a minute.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): As Joe Louis once said of Billy Conn, he can run but he can't hide.