

Oral Questions

Mr. Nunziata: Down with the Tiger-Cats!

Ms. Copps: I am perfectly willing to bet with the Member for York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata) that we will take him in the game this weekend.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

TRADE

UNITED STATES DUTY ON CANADIAN SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister for International Trade my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In a speech given to a group of U.S. businessmen three weeks ago, the Minister for International Trade said that the U.S. decision on softwood lumber was: "An unacceptable attempt to impose U.S. views on how other Governments should manage their natural resources." Last evening the Prime Minister accepted a proposal to negotiate with the Americans, as opposed to fighting that measure. Why has the Government now reversed its policy? Why has it done this double-backward somersault? Does this not put all the other natural resource industries in this country in real danger and at real risk to similar U.S. countervail action?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the last part of that question is no. The Prime Minister will be making a statement later today as a result of agreements that have been reached between the Government of Canada and the Governments of the provinces which, as the Hon. Member will know, have been working together on this issue since it arose.

EFFECT OF POSSIBLE PRECEDENT

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, the reason we raise questions now is to try to determine why the Government has changed its position. Does this not set a very dangerous precedent, if we accept in principle a U.S. decision that will have an application to the potash industry, the pulp and paper industry, and all other natural resource industries, and will give a signal to all the comparable U.S. industries to take similar action against these vital natural resource industries in Canada?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member, as the representative of western Canada in the Liberal Party, will know about time zone differences. I think he will find it advisable to await the statement by the Prime Minister, which will be made shortly in Vancouver.

Mr. Axworthy: It is because of the time zone difference that we are hoping that we can deflect the Prime Minister from this foolhardy position he seems to be undertaking.

CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS—EXCHANGE VALUE OF CANADIAN DOLLAR

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Murphy, the U.S. chief negotiator, said yesterday that a condition of a free trade agreement must be a change in the value of the Canadian dollar. Will that not put our resource industries in double jeopardy, not only facing an increase in export tax, but also losing their competitive advantage in world markets? Is that not another good reason for pause and not to undertake this dangerous course of beginning to negotiate a deal with the Americans rather than legitimately fighting it in the U.S. courts and international tribunals?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in the course of one question the Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry has misquoted the U.S. trade negotiator and described as foolhardy a proposal that he has not seen yet.

• (1120)

AUTO PACT—STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO UNITED STATES NEGOTIATOR

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It is clear from his speech yesterday that U.S. trade negotiator Murphy has not given up the idea of having the Auto Pact and its safeguards on the free trade negotiating table. Will the Secretary of State for External Affairs use this Question Period to send a clear message to Ambassador Murphy that the Government will not allow the Auto Pact, or its safeguards, to be up for negotiation in these free trade discussions and thereby give reassurance in this important matter to some 700,000 Canadian workers whose jobs are linked to the preservation of the Auto Pact and its current safeguards?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat the position taken by our chief negotiator, with a slight grammatical revision. Since the Auto Pact is not broken, we are not going to change it.

[Translation]

PROGRAMS FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PROVINCES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, Ambassador Murphy also said that in the free trade talks his Government will insist that the provinces change their purchasing and marketing policies.

Is the Government prepared to give up its important regional development programs for the provinces, or is the Government prepared to reject today this request by Ambassador Murphy?