

Oral Questions

observed in the past that had made a major contribution toward the ratification of an agreement on reducing levels of nuclear arms, as far as that question is concerned, we do not agree with a policy that could destroy the unity of NATO, and we do not agree with a policy that could be a threat to what we have accomplished so far in reducing levels of nuclear arms.

● (1425)

[English]

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I too believe in living up to our commitments. The agreement to test the Cruise missile in Canada was directly tied, under a two-track NATO decision, to the negotiations on intermediate range nuclear weapons. Now that the superpowers have agreed in principle to ban intermediate range nuclear weapons, is the Government willing to respond, in a complementary and positive way, to that historic agreement? Or is the Minister suggesting that there is a different rationale for Cruise testing? Are he and the Government shifting their ground on behalf of the people of Canada?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is no. I am not shifting my ground. A review of the record will see that the Leader of the Opposition is in fact shifting his ground. What he should do is read the record—

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Read the speech!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):—rather than *The Globe and Mail* of Toronto.

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TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES TALKS—MINISTERS' VISIT TO WASHINGTON

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I have a question which I would also like to present to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I presume that he speaks for the Government.

Last week, when Simon Reisman suspended the trade talks, the Prime Minister said at the time that we were going to wait for Washington to make its moves. We have now had the spectacle twice in a week of cabinet Ministers going to Washington—I suppose the United States Air Force does not fly this way any more—even though it is quite clear that at this late date the possibility of getting a fair trade deal in the Canadian national interest is virtually zero.

I want to ask the Secretary of State this question. Is he prepared to explain to the House what position the delegation

is taking to Washington today? Is it a deal at any price, or is the delegation simply going to deliver an official notice of withdrawal from the trade negotiations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is neither of those things. The Hon. Member will recall that one of the questions of very real importance to Canada is the ability to put in place some reliable mechanism for the resolution of disputes. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition expressed his view the other day that that was impossible, that that would never happen so he did not want to try. We thought it was worth trying. There has been in fact some slight movement by the Americans.

There has been an agreement more or less in principle to the idea of a tribunal. But there has been no agreement on rules that would guide such a tribunal. In our judgment a tribunal without rules would not provide Canada with the kind of guarantees and security that we require. That is among the items that are being discussed in Washington today.

We think it is better to see if we can make progress to protect Canada's interests rather than simply walk away from the negotiations.

REQUEST FOR TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to pose a supplementary question to the Minister. When he states that the only issue is really a dispute settlement mechanism, he ignores that there are many other issues of major concern, particularly to Canadians, for example, the right of Canada to decide for itself in its own sovereignty the kind of support programs and subsidies it will have for regional development, and other forms of assistance to overcome disparities in this country are of concern. Are those also part of those negotiations in Washington today?

Would the Minister on behalf of the Government table what kind of correspondence, what kind of statements, and what kind of counter proposals have been made so that, for the first time, Canadians will know what is going on? Are we being sold down the river? Are we negotiating away the right of this country to make decisions in its own sovereign interest?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the answer to those last two questions, as it has been on the dozens of times the Hon. Member has put them in exactly those terms, is no. He has also—and I am sure he did it inadvertently—misquoted me. I said that among the things being considered and discussed in Washington in this meeting requested by the Americans is the question of a dispute resolution mechanism—it is among the items.