

Statements by Ministers

imports to the United States coming through Canada to the quota that is provided for them.

The Minister has pointed out that Canada is a fair trader in steel. In fact, we buy more steel and supplies than we export to the United States. Algoma Steel buys much of its iron ore from Michigan and buys coal from West Virginia. Therefore, Algoma is in a very good position to argue that we should keep a fair and open border. However, if millions of tons of steel are coming through Canada and finding their way into the United States from countries which are subject to a voluntary restraint agreement, we obviously do not have much of an argument.

That is why, provided the legislation is as we agreed in negotiations with the Government, we will be pleased to support and expedite it. I am glad to have had this chance to indicate the understanding and support of the Official Opposition for this motion.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, after the serious problems which emerged in the context of trying to deal with the trade dispute with the United States on softwood lumber we hope very much that this attempt to initiate new policy on steel will be a success and will make some progress toward creating stability in the steel trade between our two countries. As the House should know, we have an \$8 billion industry which employs over 50,000 workers. This industry must be given very serious and continuing support by the Government if it is to deal with the difficult circumstances which exist in the international steel trade at the moment.

In recent years there has very much been managed trade between the United States and Canada. The steel companies on this side of the border have attempted to regulate their exports in such a way as to maintain stability in a North American situation. That policy has had some tensions and some benefits which have been assisted very much by the steel caucus of this House. I would like to pay tribute to that caucus and to the Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong) who has been our representative in it.

The program which was announced today talks about monitoring and suggests the use of licensing. We, too, have been talking with the Minister's office about the nature of this proposed legislation and certainly intend to support it and facilitate its passage through the House. However, when we look at the rest of the program announced as a steel policy by the Minister, we must see that it is really a very limp and limited attempt to deal with the serious problems facing a very important industry in the country.

For instance, we would like to have seen some commitment by the Government to long-term efforts on the part of business

and labour within this industry to work together, to plan, and to attempt to expand the varieties and specialties of steel which we produce in this country and, in turn, to export those specialties to other countries in addition to the United States in order to diversify our trade beyond the United States with its particular vulnerabilities.

We also believe it is very important in a serious steel policy to address the very great difficulties which face Algoma Steel. A large number of people have lost their jobs at Algoma Steel in recent months and the number of jobs which are threatened in the future should have been part of the Minister's statement today. There should have been a statement with regard to worker adjustment which would have assisted the employees to make the shifts which may be necessary for them given the severe pressure facing that company.

As I evaluate this statement I believe that with regard to its trade implications and monitoring it is a step forward. However, with regard to attempts to deal with the whole set of serious and difficult problems within the steel industry across Canada it is simply a limp response to a very great and serious problem.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a point of order. I do not want to sound nit-picky. We appreciate that the Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney) has chosen the House of Commons as the appropriate place to make a statement on the situation regarding steel. It is a very important statement. I applaud her for it and appreciate it.

● (1530)

My point of order is perhaps directed to the Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council (Mr. Lewis). It is that we received a copy of this important statement about halfway through Question Period. Making the House as productive and positive as possible requires an element of co-operation and I simply remind the Hon. Member that it would certainly help if we had written statements perhaps five minutes before Question Period. Again, I am not suggesting that we do not appreciate what the Minister has done today. We certainly do.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) has been very generous in his comments about the practice that the Minister has been following, which is to present a statement to the House. Of course, that is appropriate.

The Chair has commented upon the usefulness of trying to get statements to opposition critics as early as possible. I am sure Hon. Ministers will be guided by that as much as possible.