

Oral Questions

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): The people opposite wonder where. If they would read the newspapers they would see that there is a substantial increase in the amount of activity in the housing market. That is going to lead directly to housing starts. The increase in housing starts is going to lead to increased business for the forest products industry and for all the industries that supply the new housing markets. That is how we are going to create jobs in this country.

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TRADE

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we will solve these problems when we have a different government and a different Minister of Finance.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien: I have another question for the government about its economic policy, this time about its foreign economic policy. I would like to ask the Minister for International Trade this question.

The President of Mexico, in a discussion we had with him this morning, made it absolutely clear that energy will not be on the table at the trade negotiations with the United States and with Canada.

If Mexico can say that energy is not on the table, why can Canada not do the same thing, and make sure that Canada will be like Mexico, which controls its self-sufficiency and the security of supply in energy?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, quite obviously, Canada and Mexico have different interests with respect to energy. It was in the national interest of Canada to try to get a more secure market for our surplus of natural gas in the United States. Mexico is not in the same position. Their Constitution states the government must own the oil resource. So we recognize that this is the case.

I am glad to see the hon. the Leader of the Opposition back. He looks in good shape. He is sitting in a very dangerous position, but he is looking in good shape.

Mr. Simmons: He will not be there long.

Mr. Crosbie: That is true.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Much of this conversation could take place after Question Period. Perhaps the minister could answer the question.

Mr. Crosbie: I hope that the voice of Clyde Wells is not being heard in the House, Mr. Speaker.

The President of Mexico said today in an address at lunch time that doubts that spring from reason with respect to future economic activities are certainly understandable, but that doubts that arise from fear are not. I would suggest to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that he heed that advice. If he has any doubts, I hope they will spring from reason and not simply from fears that somehow are conjured up by the Liberal caucus.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pursue the questions to the Minister of International Trade about free trade within North America. The minister is on record as saying that the United States-Canada free trade agreement could be reopened in the upcoming trilateral negotiations. And yet today, here in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said that the free trade agreement will not be reopened.

When will the government make its position clear and how does the government believe that a trilateral agreement can be concluded without reopening the bilateral agreement?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, in the event there was actually some difference between what I said and what the Prime Minister said, I would be inclined to follow whatever the Prime Minister had said.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: I would still have my own opinion, but it might not be the opinion of the government. However, I do not think there is any difference between anything the Prime Minister has said and that I have said.

The United States has agreed and we have agreed; we are not negotiating to open up the U.S.-Canada free trade agreement. But if we get some improvements, if we get something better while we are negotiating the tripartite agreement then there might consequentially have to be some changes to the U.S.-Canada free trade agreement. But we are not opening up the negotiations. So I do not think I have said anything different from the Prime Minister, but if I have, I am sorry.