

Oral Questions

Did the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff confirm in Washington that this mechanism provided for in the Agreement is unconstitutional under American law? Did the Americans propose that this mechanism now come under the President? Is this situation not worse than not having the Trade Agreement would be? Why is the Government of Canada asking us to approve the Agreement immediately, within a five-day period, while negotiations are still going on in Washington?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I think the House knows and all Canadians know what the position of the Leader of the Opposition is. The Opposition is opposed to it and will be opposed to it whether we debate it for five days, six days, 10 days, or 20 days.

May I simply point out what the Deputy House Leader has offered opposition Parties. It is five long days, which will be the equivalent of 27 hours or nine normal days. If opposition Members want more than that, then they should tell us what they want and we will certainly take it under consideration. Do they want six, seven, or eight days? Let us sit down and negotiate that. We would be prepared to do that.

In so far as the other point the Hon. Member has made, he knows that the administration signed off on this deal. They support it, they believe it. It is subject to ratification by Congress. That is the process that we are going through right now, and we are confident that it will be approved in due course.

DEFINITION OF SUBSIDY

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister has a firm position for the deal, we have a firm position against the deal.

Mr. Darling: Okay, then let's get going.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Let's get going, says the Member from Parry Sound. I want to tell him, and through him, the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, that the purpose of debate is to air the views of this House of Commons to allow the people of Canada to form a judgment, and we encourage that debate and we are anxious for that debate.

The Deputy Prime Minister says that the Americans have signed off on this deal. They haven't.

Mr. Mazankowski: The administration has.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): They have not. They are still arguing and they still have an opportunity to negotiate for a five to seven-year period the definition of subsidy. That definition of subsidy is still being negotiated by the Congress and the President for the purpose of the American legislation.

I want to cite to the Deputy Prime Minister the words of one key American Senator, Max Baucus, who said, "We are going to hold Canada's feet to the fire". The agreement between the

President and the Congress to implement the Prime Minister's trade deal with the United States does not save Canada from hostile unilateral American action on subsidies; it singles out Canada for hostile action. The Prime Minister is now on the verge of delivering the exact opposite he promised Canadians, not secure access to the American market but more vulnerability to American unilateral action on subsidies.

Why, in these circumstances, when the deal is still being negotiated between the two countries, when the President and the Congress are still arguing about it, when we still have not seen the American legislation, this headlong rush by Parliament when the deal has not been closed?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition talked about the duration of the negotiations which have been taking place between our two countries and the debate that has been going on in this House and throughout the country with respect to the free trade agreement. If he is so interested in getting on with the debate, let's get on with it. Stop the filibustering, stop the cheap procedural tactics, stop tying Parliament up. We want to get on with the work.

I know the Right Hon. Member may not want to work this summer. We are prepared to work. We want to work because there is important legislation that has to be done.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): It's because you can't handle the business of the House, that's why.

Mr. Mazankowski: What is at issue here is the assurance that the principles of the agreement will be upheld by both—

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Where is this hard-working Government this morning?

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, don't let the Leader of the Opposition start talking about attendance. Let's not start talking about attendance, because we can do the same thing.

What we are interested in is the assurance that the principles of the deal that have been negotiated will be upheld. The binational disputes panel is certainly a very important element to that. We have expressed some concerns about certain areas. Those concerns are being taken into consideration and we have every confidence that they will be rectified in a satisfactory manner for Canadians in the interest of all Canadians.

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PUBLIC WORKS

BRIBERY ALLEGATION

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister and concerns the administration of the Department of Public