

Oral Questions

such a benign mood, on such a complex, serious and vital issue for Canada as this, why are Canadians being allowed less than one month to come to Ottawa to appear before the committee and to express their views on this crucial trade arrangement with the United States? Why do the residents of Vancouver Quadra, or of any other riding in Canada, have to travel hundreds or thousands of miles to come to Ottawa to get the chance to have their say on this Bill? Why is the Government afraid of the Canadian public?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, once again the Leader of the Opposition expresses his own fears. If there is one individual in one Party who is afraid of the Canadian public, he is sitting opposite in this House of Commons.

The free trade debate has gone on for a long period of time. It has been debated. It has been raised by hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals across the country.

Obviously there will be presentations put to the parliamentary committee within the next month. I would think that the individual Members of Parliament who sit on that committee will give very proper attention to those who come before them. There will be full and adequate hearings, and the members of the committee will give proper consideration to the presentations that are made.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, the Acting Prime Minister has a unique opportunity. She is in charge today of the Government of Canada. She can leave the House immediately, go see the Governor General, and let's issue the writ. What about that?

Some Hon. Members: Go, go!

TERMS OF IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Acting Prime Minister has been briefed by the Hon. Member for Brampton—Georgetown. He is looking real tough there. He had better get back to his constituency and protect his behind.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The Acting Prime Minister talked about fear. More than a month ago the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Burney, in a panic, flew down to Washington because, on behalf of the Government of Canada, he was disturbed about what might be in the American legislation, particularly having to do with the tribunal and with the definition of subsidy.

• (1425)

My question is this. How can the parliamentary committee studying the Canadian legislation implementing the deal have any confidence that Canadian concerns expressed by the Prime Minister's Office about the American legislation have been addressed when that legislation has not yet been made public?

What is the idea of the Government pushing our legislation through this House in such a hurry when we have not yet seen the American legislation? Why the obscene haste?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Two points with regard to the preamble, Mr. Speaker. One has to do with recent elections. The Lac-Saint-Jean result would not, I think, provide any great support or encouragement to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: Second, because he raised the issue—

Mr. Riis: You bought that election.

Miss MacDonald: Now we are hearing from the NDP which managed 9 per cent of the vote in Lac-Saint-Jean.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Miss MacDonald: The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition raised another point when he said that Mr. Burney went down to Washington in a panic. I want to assure him that I have never known Mr. Burney to do anything in a panic.

Finally, I want to say that we are proceeding with legislation in this House and in committee because this happens to be a sovereign Parliament. We decide the process and the way this Parliament will implement legislation in this country. We do not, like the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition seems to think, take direction from the people he listens to in Washington. Those are the ways in which the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition seems to think this Parliament should operate. We do not think that way because we know this is a sovereign Parliament.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I can only say to the Acting Prime Minister that if her assessment of the key to electoral success for the Tory Party in Lac-Saint-Jean was \$164 million, it will cost the Canadian people \$45 billion for it to win the general election.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Write the cheque, Mike.

Mr. Axworthy: It would take that much to win Rosedale alone.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct this question to the Acting Prime Minister. We have seen a suppression of the rights of Parliament in its ability to provide access to Canadians to proper committee hearings and the ability to make amendments. In addition, the Canadian people are being put at a major disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the U.S.

The omnibus Trade Bill is now in front of Congress ready to be passed. Our senior trade negotiator, Mr. Ritchie, has acknowledged that Bill would totally undermine the trade