

*Oral Questions*

I believe it is the first time this type of access and involvement in the making of treaties has been offered to opposition members in the House of Commons. My hon. friend—and I believe it is the case with the Liberal Party—has chosen to forgo this opportunity to participate in making policy in order that they can participate in Question Period and in politics of the basest sort. It is that sort of approach that I do not think is becoming of members of Parliament when this unprecedented offer has been made.

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North):** Mr. Speaker, the question for the Minister for International Trade is not whether the confidential information is available or not. The question is basically: When is this government going to share with the Canadian people its objectives in the North American free trade negotiations? It is a simple question.

The minister refers to the committee being given information. Many months ago, a year and a half ago, the committee called for the closest possible consultation with Parliament so that the people of Canada had the opportunity to understand what was happening in the negotiations.

Is the minister now saying that the confidentiality rule will not be attempted and, rather, that we will have an open discussion in the committee of the government's policies in this vital issue?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, I have made known our objectives in the committee hearing about three weeks ago. I have made a number of speeches where I have set out quite clearly what the objectives of the Government of Canada are in the North American free trade negotiations.

What we have offered to both opposition party members of the committee is access to more detailed briefings on a confidential basis so that we can gain the benefit of their judgment on how the process should proceed. It is similar to the process we have under way with the International Trade Advisory Committee and the industry advisory committees where we meet with them on a regular basis, together with the provinces, in seeking

broad sources of advice on the specific elements of the negotiations.

As I have said in my previous answer, this has never been done in the House of Commons. Quite frankly I am disappointed in the hon. member and his colleagues in not allowing this process to proceed in that open way.

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North):** Mr. Speaker, what benefit does this bring to the Canadian people? Am I supposed to spend my whole time talking to the member from the New Democratic Party about the deal behind some sort of closed doors?

The question is: What is this government doing to inform the Canadian people? What is it doing about the 50 per cent rule in automotive products? What is it doing on a subsidy code? What is it doing on a dispute settlement mechanism that will be prompt and binding?

These are the questions that we should be having answers to. When is this government going to share with the Canadian people what it is doing in these negotiations?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows that in the previous rounds of multilateral trade negotiations or in the auto pact negotiations his party, the governments that he supported in the past on the Liberal side, gave no information to members of Parliament and gave precious little information to Canadians who were going to be affected by the process.

What we have done on our side when we have been negotiating treaties, the free trade agreement, the North American free trade agreement and the multilateral treaties, is that we have opened up the process.

My hon. friend is very well aware that during the process the government is provided information by industry that is confidential, that is commercially important to other countries if that confidential information is provided. It is on that basis that we have to draw a line. I think my hon. friend is well aware as a member of the private sector before he got to the House of Commons why we must draw that line for commercially confidential reasons.