

Oral Questions

Canadian people? Is the Government not really trying to pave the way so that it can make further concessions to get its free trade deal? Is that not really what is taking place?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Of course not, Mr. Speaker. The situation is quite clear. The negotiator for Canada suspended negotiations because the proposals then on the table from the United States were not acceptable to Canada. It is up to the United States to make new proposals if it wants to have the negotiations continue. Those new proposals have not been received. The ball is very much in its court. I think that has been made clear to the House of Commons by the Prime Minister, and is clear to everyone willing to understand.

[Translation]

FREE TRADE—ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN TWO MONTREAL NEWSPAPERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, may I again direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister and seek clarification on the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement impasse?

Yesterday the Prime Minister told the House that the ball is in the American court and ruled out the possibility of a summit meeting with the American President. Indeed he told the House, as reported in *The Gazette* of Montreal:

[English]

—“PM rules out meeting Reagan now”.

[Translation]

A few hours later in Montreal he met with the editorial staff of *La Presse* and said the opposite: “Mulroney says he is prepared to meet with Reagan”. No wonder we are asking questions! Who is telling the truth, *La Presse* or *The Gazette* of Montreal?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I cannot vouch for the accuracy of reports published by *La Presse* and *The Gazette* of Montreal, but I can speak for the Prime Minister and the Government. Yesterday the Prime Minister told the House, and I quote:

[English]

It would be, I think, inappropriate at this time and perhaps unhelpful at this very moment for the President and myself or anyone else at that level to get involved.

That is the position of the Government of Canada as stated in the House and as stated in Montreal. Just so that the House understands the situation, if there were ever to be any meeting on a higher level, it would occur only after a change in the United States position.

[Translation]

FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister accurately quoted the Prime Minister on page 9286 of *Hansard*, and I quote word for word:

It would be, I think, inappropriate at this time and perhaps unhelpful at this very moment for the President and myself or anyone else at that level to get involved.

Here is my question: Who is this person? Is it Derek Burney who spoke to Mr. Howard Baker and submitted the five Canadian conditions? Were there negotiations yesterday afternoon?

What I want to know is this: Is the Canadian public being manipulated? Is public opinion being manipulated by this Government, because on one hand they would have us believe that negotiations have broken off, and on the other that negotiations are being handled by the No. 1 man in the Prime Minister's Office, Derek Burney, and that there are five conditions to the resumption of negotiations? Who is telling the truth?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is no. The Government of Canada did not submit five conditions—nor three nor seven—since the chief negotiator suspended negotiations.

I know there have been rumours, but they are false. Of course, certain Americans and certain Canadians do have conversations and that is quite normal. But the essential point to resume negotiations is a change in the American position, and it is up to the Americans to get in touch with us on that issue.

[English]

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, *The Washington Post* reports today that President Reagan and his top trade advisers decided at a meeting that the President should not call the Prime Minister in order to initiate some further action with respect to the free trade talks. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance if he can guarantee to the House that neither he nor Derek Burney, who is also going to Washington, will be making further concessions and contacts with the White House administration in order potentially to sell out Canada by trying to get these talks restarted on bended knee.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the Hon. Member, travelling at high speed, has smashed into a brick wall and is showing the consequences.

The situation is very clear. The Hon. Member may try to distort it if it serves his ideological purposes but the situation is quite clear. We have entered into negotiations that we believe, if they succeed, will be very much in the interests of Canada. They are at a point of impasse. They are at that point of impasse because the position last put forward by the United States is not a position that Canada can accept.