

the private sector, and we have brought our chief negotiator back from Geneva for this purpose.

Mr. Stevens: What have you done in parliament about it?

Mr. Chrétien: We are waiting for your questions.

Mr. Goodale: When was the last time you asked?

Mr. Chrétien: The hon. member was in Geneva, and we asked officials to brief him.

Mr. Stevens: You didn't even know I was there.

Mr. Chrétien: My people keep me informed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chrétien: It is terribly dishonest for a man to talk about secretive policies of the government when we have taken the time to have our officials brief him.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chrétien: How could the hon. member be minister of finance in a Tory government? The people of Canada will not stand too much double-talk with regard to a problem like this. I think the people of Canada believe that this House can be a debating place where the truth can be put on the table—and I am not shy at all about what our government is doing in this field. In tariff negotiations we have a lot to say, but we have to play the game according to the rules. If hon. members think we are wrong, let them try to make some political brownie points. The hon. member should tell us in this House what he thinks.

Mr. Stevens: That is what we are doing today.

Mr. Chrétien: I would have welcomed a positive speech as a result of which we could have learned something, but today the hon. member just tried to score points. The hon. member who spoke for the New Democratic Party at least had a position. He did not entirely agree with what we are doing, but he was contributing to the debate. He expressed his views. I do not agree with all of them, because in many fields if we become too protective we can destroy what we have.

We are great exporters of many agricultural products and other products, and in order to keep those markets we have to make concessions. As I said earlier, we have to protect the jobs of the people in the textile industry. This is a position we take—and we have stated that—but at the same time we know we have to open our market to developing countries. We cannot be the great exporter we are and be too protective, and that is why it is difficult to develop a large industrial strategy. We are not a communist state or a socialist state where everything is controlled by the government. Sometimes we have to adjust our position because it is dangerous to be too doctrinaire.

Canada is a very complex country to administer. It stretches 4,000 miles from east to west and 4,000 miles from south to

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north. We cannot have one single sector and one system which applies all across the country. We need flexibility. For example, I do not think the textile industry is the best industry we have because it is not highly technological. At the same time I am a realist and I know that if we close the textile industry in some parts of the country in order to have a higher technological industry, the new industry will not necessarily go to the places where the textiles were. I feel that it is not very good to have everything concentrated in certain parts of Canada, because what we have to worry about are the workers in Waterloo, in small towns in eastern Quebec, New Brunswick, or even in Winnipeg where there is now a textile industry of some substance. If we close there and all the jobs are created in other parts of Canada, we are no better off and we have to cope with unemployment problems in that industry.

The hon. member for Lévis (Mr. Guay) has always been very aggressive in trying to promote the interests of the shipbuilding industry. That is another industry in which there are some problems and we have to be protective; but at the same time there is a softening in the international market. There are fewer ships being built at this time than before. It is a very difficult problem and perhaps we will have to develop a sectorial strategy for the problem because, as the hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltsman) mentioned, we cannot have an across the board policy which plans everything, because we are too dependent on what is happening in the world. Canada is an exporting country, and we have to import. There are fluctuations in the world, and we cannot brace ourselves against every wave coming from abroad. I think the negotiations are very important for Canada. The trend will be for a reduction in the tariff, but we will have to be very careful because we need some protection for certain sectors.

A moment ago I mentioned the textile industry, but we have an interest in having a freer trade policy around the world. I am sure that would benefit Canada in the long term. If every country becomes more and more protective—and I am very surprised at the hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge—how will we be able to help the developing countries emerge with new industries? Because I am the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, this morning I received the minister of external affairs from Nigeria. I receive ministers of trade and commerce from other developing countries; they want us to open some of our markets for some of their goods. How can we achieve that and be completely protectionist? I think we have to strike the proper balance. Perhaps we have been too liberal in some sectors. I am informed that in the textile industry 55 per cent of the goods which are brought by Canadians come from abroad, compared with 45 per cent only two years ago. People from Winnipeg, from some parts of Quebec and from some parts of Ontario complain that because of too many imports local employment is suffering.

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We have to balance those things. At the same time we have to keep in mind that if we become too protective, some of the goods we are making will not find a market, and sometimes