

be threatened if trade between Canada and Quebec and between the U.S. and Quebec was reduced to zero.

Can trade between Canada, Quebec and the U.S. be reduced to zero? Will Quebecers and people in Jonquière stop buying Ford cars if these cars meet their requirements? Will people in the U.S. stop—

[English]

Mr. Flis: Mr. Speaker, I thought we were debating Bill C-105, an act to implement tax conventions between Canada and Latvia, Estonia, Trinidad and Tobago, and a protocol for the tax treaty with Hungary. I find it very difficult to see how what the hon. member is saying is relevant to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The hon. parliamentary secretary of course is a very experienced parliamentarian. The question of relevance does come up from time to time in the House. In the past few days it has come up and possibly in the days to come it will come up more often. It is good that we are reminded of it and we should be mindful of it.

[Translation]

The question of relevance is raised from time to time. It was probably raised a bit more often this past little while and it is likely to come up more often yet in the weeks to come. While I wish to remain sympathetic to both sides I just want to say that the hon. parliamentary secretary reminded us of the need for relevance and I hope we will be mindful of this requirement in all our remarks. I will be monitoring the debate very closely.

The hon. member for Jonquière still has the floor.

Mr. Caron: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs called me on relevance because I thought it was rather obvious. Here is a country, Canada, with 28 million people. This country may well rank sixth in the world in terms of per capita gross domestic product, given purchasing power parity. This is based on 1991 figures.

• (1305)

This country, this great country which is a member of the G-7 and the international jet set, sees fit to enter into trade relations with countries that I would not describe as small—I will not use this qualifier often used by our friends opposite, because it evokes little people and conveys the somewhat pejorative idea of being of minor importance—but rather as countries with not as large a population as Canada.

Latvia, for example, has a population of 2.6 million; Estonia, 1.5 million; Trinidad and Tobago, 1.3 million; and Hungary, 10 million. While these countries do not have the economic prestige and stature of Canada, as it stands and as our friends opposite see it, Canada has negotiated tax treaties with them based on the OECD model. This is normal. Earlier, the spokes-

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person for the opposition said that this is normal; this is the way things are done between civilized countries of the world, that is those countries which look after their best interest.

We did not see or hear anything from Latvia, Hungary, Trinidad and Tobago to the effect that Canada is too big, that its economy is too strong, or that it will impose unacceptable conditions to those countries.

I do not know for sure, since we do not have newspaper articles from Latvia, Hungary, Trinidad and Tobago, and all the other countries, but we do not feel that Canada acted improperly with sovereign nations.

The point which I am making is that, right now, English language newspapers in Canada are constantly saying: "If Quebec becomes a sovereign nation, Canada will not deal with it because Canada is twice as big as Quebec. You will not count at all on the North American market. You will probably not be able to trade any more. Americans will probably stop buying your aluminum or your paper, and you will stop buying their cars, their refrigerators and IBM computers. You will have to go down on your knees and pay twice the price, because the United States is too big. Americans will not comply with international standards; they will try to crush you".

When I look at the bill before us this morning, I realize that this will not be the case. We are talking about Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Trinidad and Tobago. We are talking about countries which do not have close relations with Canada, which have not been part of Canada for 130 years; there is no problem with these countries. Canada does some trading and has good diplomatic relations with these countries, and there is no problem when the time comes to sign conventions.

However, when they are talking about Quebec, which has been part of Canada for 130 years, they kowtow to the U.S. They seek a statement from the U.S. secretary of state, in the hope that he will say: "Should Quebec become sovereign, we may decide to renegotiate NAFTA, we may impose additional conditions; your cultural industry may be crushed; American movies will flood the Saguenay—Lac—Saint—Jean market, which is 98 per cent French. Movie theatres showing French language movies will close; French language newspapers will have to be highly subsidized and may even have to stop publishing. It will be the end of the world".

When you see bills such as this one, which is described by the government's spokesperson as being the normal thing to do, without any problem, you tell yourself: "Indeed, there is no problem signing commercial treaties with Latvia, Hungary or any other country. Why then should there be problems if Quebec becomes a sovereign nation"?

I think it might be worthwhile to use some examples. If they had said "We will make an exception for Latvia and Estonia,