

Mr. La Salle: I think it is important that all Hon. Members be made fully aware that this office will also identify Canadian Government surpluses.

With that in mind, it becomes clear that such rationalization of construction and services within Treasury Board and Public Works Canada can only result in substantial savings for all taxpayers.

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[English]

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

SITUATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In November of this year Premier Bennett said he would not negotiate with the Indians of British Columbia until they abandoned their claim to having any aboriginal title in that province. While the Minister was in British Columbia, did he succeed in getting the province to change its mind and agree that there are aboriginal rights in British Columbia and that those rights have constitutional validity?

Hon. David Crombie (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, as I believe the Hon. Member may know, I spent most of my time in all of the meetings dealing with the question of process and the question of a pause in the activities on Lyell Island. That is because the important thing from the point of view of the Haida people, the Government of the Province of British Columbia, as well as the federal Government is to be able to begin a process by which all of the issues which affect the Haida people, and other people who have a concerned interest, will be able to proceed in a way which will satisfy their concerns.

POSITION OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate what the Minister was able to do, but would he not agree that until the Government of British Columbia recognizes that there are constitutional aboriginal rights there can be no just resolution for the Haida people, or any other people of Indian ancestry, in the Province of British Columbia?

Hon. David Crombie (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is correct. The Province of British Columbia does in fact recognize constitutional aboriginal rights. In fact it agreed to the amendment when it was brought forward in 1982.

Oral Questions

TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS—LUMBER EXPORTS TO UNITED STATES

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. On November 26 the Secretary of State for External Affairs wrote to me and stated definitively that the lumber issue is now Canada's number one trade problem with the United States. As the Prime Minister knows, the President Reagan raised this with him yesterday on the phone. What precisely is on the agenda for the lumber discussions with the U.S. administration? Since the Minister for International Trade says he is going to proceed with those talks, I would like to know just exactly what is being offered? Does it include United States access to Canadian forest lands and to raw logs?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think that question, and others, have been clearly answered by the letter which President Reagan sent to the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Rostenkowski, in which he pointed out that, notwithstanding the existence of mutual irritants which may exist on both sides of the border, it is his view that the trade discussions should proceed because the ultimate conclusion would, hopefully, be beneficial to both sides and ought not to be interrupted by this.

The position of the Government of Canada is that we will, of course, maintain very vigorously the position the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and others, have advanced in regard to timber and other matters.

AGENDA FOR TALKS

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): My question is again directed to the Prime Minister. Since the Secretary of State for External Affairs is on record in this House as stating that Canada will in no way consider any protectionist measures proposed by the U.S. Congress against our softwood exports, would the Prime Minister explain just what forest industry related items are going to be on the agenda for the talks which the Minister for International Trade is proposing, particularly in light of the comments made in this House and outside by the Secretary of State for External Affairs?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I don't see anything either troubling or inconsistent in anything which has been said. The President wrote, as he must do constitutionally, to Congress, seeking authorization to negotiate a bilateral trade arrangement, if it can be done. I reported to this House on September 26, along similar lines.

We will sit down with the provinces, as agreed, within the next 90 days, as we will in parallel fashion after the Americans receive their approval, if they do.

Mr. Fulton: What about wood?

Mr. Mulroney: And not just wood. Timber is a very high priority with us. It will be pursued with the greatest of vigour