

trying to help the Auditor General secure all of the information possible. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Minister of Justice and myself are very much committed to ensuring that all information available to the Government of Canada, excluding that which has been for good reason covered by the reference I have just explained, will be made available to allow the Auditor General to put a spotlight on the transaction. Apparently we had a little difficulty in finding the proper formula, because it was an unusual kind of request. I hope we will be able to satisfy all requests by the Auditor General so that this information can be made available to Canadians and to the Parliament of Canada.

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● (1430)

TRADE

SECTORAL FREE TRADE PROPOSAL

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. As he knows, yesterday the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Economic Union and Development Prospects introduced a very important discussion on the issue of free trade. Yet, at the same time, a member of the Prime Minister's staff, Mr. MacMillan, dismissed the option of free trade in a speech even though various Cabinet Ministers, including the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion last night on television, and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, endorsed the notion of sectoral free trade.

Could the Prime Minister indicate whether the Government, as a policy, has abandoned negotiations with the United States on matters of sectoral free trade in a number of very critical sectors, like urban transportation and agricultural equipment? Could he indicate who in his Government is speaking on the very vital question of trade—which of the three or four Ministers who have spoken on it, or will it be his personal policy adviser?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the paper submitted by the Minister of Finance clearly indicated, it is a vital sector for public consideration and debate. It is presently being reviewed not only by Cabinet and caucus. I had the pleasure of listening to the Hon. Member last night on television express his views on the issue. I learned a great deal from them. They are at substantial variance with those of his Party, but I thought it was a great contribution to the debate.

In this important areas we are presently evolving a policy which will be announced pursuant to thorough consideration by Cabinet. As the Hon. Member knows, Cabinet speaks for the Government in these important areas.

Mr. Axworthy: As the Prime Minister knows, in our Party we are always encouraging free and open discussion. That is the hallmark of liberalism.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

Mr. Axworthy: I am afraid the Prime Minister did not answer the question.

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER'S POLICY ADVISER NOT MAKE STATEMENTS

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, we have a statement from a very important member of the Prime Minister's Office dismissing the idea of sectoral free trade at a time when we are in negotiations. We also have a circumstance where the United States has already undertaken open hearings on how Canadian protective barriers would inhibit any free trade area.

First, will the Prime Minister's policy adviser no longer make statements on this vital issue so that we do not confuse the issue? Second, will we have an opportunity to debate the free trade issue in Parliament? Third, will we also have an opportunity very soon to begin examining the way in which the United States has protective barriers to Canadian trade in that country?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this is a remarkable spectacle. The Member is suggesting that I throw a veil of secrecy over my policy adviser.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: I would have thought that consistency would require openness and people speaking out. Mr. MacMillan, with all his remarkable talents, is not the spokesman for the Government. He was delivering himself of a personal and informed view which will be put into the mix with the opinion of others in the House and elsewhere. I hope we will come out at an early moment with an appropriate response to the query raised by my hon. friend that will be beneficial to Canada in terms of job creation and our longer term trading future.

REQUEST THAT COMMISSION BE DISBANDED

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I want to pursue the same question. It is apparent that there is an irreconcilable difference of opinion between, on the one hand, the chairman of the royal commission who says that we must make a leap of faith into the area of free trade, and a senior policy adviser to the Prime Minister on the other. In this matter there can only be one decision—either we go ahead with the discussions or not. Given that it is costing millions of dollars to pay for this royal commission, is the Prime Minister in a position to tell the royal commission to report its findings to date, disband it, and save public money?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am at a loss to understand the Hon. Member's outrage.

Mr. Deans: You are?