

Oral Questions

Mrs. Campagnolo: In the matter of Miracle Mart, Loto Canada is obviously servicing an area which previously was not served well. There is no possibility of detracting from the sales of the existing retailers, and I think the hon. member should be just a little more careful in the way in which he demeans our wholesalers. There are 187 of them across the country and they are providing an extremely good service. The merchandising program entered into represents a normal business practice in any other type of corporation.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**DISPOSITION OF BOYCOTT LEGISLATION—EFFECT OF PROVISIONS**

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister. Can the Deputy Prime Minister tell the House of Commons whether the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce was expressing the position of the government when he said that Ontario's anti-boycott legislation is costing Canada trade and then when he went on to say, and I quote him exactly, "We certainly don't want to lose trade with Arab nations"?

Is it the position of the Government of Canada that the central preoccupation of the government in relation to boycott legislation must be to avoid losing trade with Arab nations?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, on the latter point, the Leader of the Opposition must know that it is the policy of the Government of Canada—and I believe this view is supported by the Canadian people—that this country should trade with all nations except those which have been embargoed by action of the United Nations. That is the policy we have followed.

With respect to the more fundamental question which I believe underlies the concern of the Leader of the Opposition, I would tell him that it is obviously the policy of the Government of Canada to deplore and disapprove of boycott clauses which would in any way affect the human rights of Canadian citizens. That is quite fundamental to our policy; it is the basic principle.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: There have been differences of opinion as to the way in which a government ought to deal with such boycott provisions. The government of Ontario has taken a certain course of action about which the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has made some comments presumably based upon trade information within his possession. So it is not really a question of opinion or policy; it is a question of fact based upon information available to the minister. We have taken what I think is a reasonable position by putting before the House a boycott bill which we will call just as soon as possible.

[Mrs. Campagnolo.]

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, one fundamental question the Deputy Prime Minister skated away from is whether the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce was expressing the position of the government when he expressed those views as a minister. I would like the Deputy Prime Minister to come to that.

I would like him, also, to tell us now when he intends to introduce into this parliament, so that we might amend it, the anti-boycott legislation which we consider inadequate but which has been introduced into this House of Commons. When will it be before the House? Is it a priority bill? Does the Deputy Prime Minister not agree that the statements of his colleague make it a priority bill now, even if it was not before?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, on two occasions in this House I suggested that I was prepared to bring forward this bill and have it passed in a single day with the agreement of the parties. Now the Leader of the Opposition tells me he opposes the bill and wants to make amendments. Obviously, that arrangement could not possibly be carried forward, under his conditions, in one day.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons we are interested in a debate is so we can hear from all of the ministers as to their differing views on boycott legislation. However, certainly we consider this legislation, as it is framed, to be inadequate and we have amendments we want to propose. We will propose them expeditiously; we will debate them expeditiously. We cannot give the Deputy Prime Minister a time limit to allow him—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lang: Can you give us your amendments?

Mr. Clark: Oh, yes.

Mr. Lang: Will you show us your amendments?

Mr. Clark: We do not propose to allow the government to impose closure in advance on this piece of legislation, as it has tried to do on others, but we do propose to give the government a reasonable opportunity to bring forward a bill which we will debate within reasonable time limits.

Acting on that guarantee, I wonder if the Deputy Prime Minister will now give us an indication as to when that bill will be brought forward so that we might amend it and so that we might have a national policy on boycott practices by foreign nations, instead of having to rely upon provincial policy which is condemned by the responsible federal minister.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to underline what the Leader of the Opposition has said. I made a proposition to the House on two occasions, indicating that I would bring forward this bill provided the House agreed to pass it through all stages in one day.

Mr. Lawrence: Rubber-stamp it.

An hon. Member: We are not your backbenchers.