

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is becoming a very long preamble. Is there a question, please?

Mr. Nunziata: "You know as well as I do that in politics perception"—

Mr. Speaker: Just a question, please.

Mr. Nunziata: I should like to ask the Minister a question. The reality and the perception in respect of her running her Department are that she has lost control, that she is not in charge, and that she does not know what is going on in her Department. Who is in charge of her Department? Who is running the show?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to head a Department with 27,000 employees who are working for the benefit of other Canadians. I would say that that shows in the work they are doing and in the way in which jobs are being created in Canada.

[Translation]

REASON FOR SENDING LETTER

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. I want to ask him why he wrote this letter to his colleague. Why did he criticize his colleague in this letter?

[English]

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but my electronic device was as intermittent as the Hon. Member's question, and I did not hear the entire question.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member may repeat the question.

[Translation]

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): I'll say it again, Mr. Speaker, slowly. I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister: Why did he write this letter to his colleague? Why he criticize his colleague in this letter? Doesn't he trust him?

[English]

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence in the Minister of Employment and Immigration and, search as I might, I cannot discover any element of the remainder of that peripatetic question which might address itself to my ministerial responsibilities in any capacity.

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TRADE

SOFTWOOD LUMBER EXPORTS—U.S. INDUSTRY'S PETITION FOR IMPOSITION OF COUNTERVAIL DUTY

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, does the Secretary of State for External Affairs still stand by

his description of the move against Canadian softwood lumber as double jeopardy? Does that not, therefore, justify political action being taken by the Prime Minister against this action before the decision was taken today?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I know the Hon. Member would want to be honest to the facts, and he would know that when I used the phrase "double jeopardy" I was citing one of the legal arguments. It is a legal argument which was put by Ambassador Gotlieb to Secretary Baldrige the other day.

With regard to the leadership which is required now, I think it has two elements. First, I think it requires an atmosphere of calm on the part of all parties. For example, it is not helpful to have the New Democratic Party characterizing this as "outrageously hostile", when it knows that it is the sort of thing which has occurred before in Canada-U.S. relations and is within the legal purview of the United States.

Second, I believe it is very important that we immediately bring together representatives of the provinces, the federal Government, the industry, and the labour unions, to ensure that we have the best possible means of defending the Canadian case. It is for that reason that I am convening a meeting in Vancouver of the provinces, the federal Government, industry, and labour, a week today, to ensure that Canada will be in a position to put forward a consistent, calm, strong case and win again as we won in 1983.

PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER TO UNITED STATES PRESIDENT

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Just a week too late, as usual, with this Government. Could the Prime Minister not have put into this letter that argument about double jeopardy in respect of softwood lumber which he himself has made? Would that not have taken a much stronger case to the United States than the one which was taken?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Opposition is asking that the Prime Minister make the legal case because the Prime Minister would add political clout to the legal case. That is precisely the point. We are dealing with a legal matter. A political intervention would backfire on Canada and would cost Canadians jobs. We made the legal case. We made it several times. We made it in all the appropriate ways. We did not make it in an inappropriate way, because to make it in an inappropriate way would have run risks for Canada which were not necessary and could have put in jeopardy a case we expect to win, if we get the cooperation of Members of the House and of others in the community across the country.