

Oral Questions

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a question about the North American free trade agreement. I was interested in the fact that both the old line parties blamed each other's recession on each other's bureaucrats and any other excuse they could find. Neither one of them spoke about the damage to the economy of this country done by the free trade agreement. None.

I want to ask the Minister for International Trade this question. Considering our experience with the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, has this government made up-to-date impact studies, sector by sector, of what the draft bracketed agreement will mean to jobs here in Canada, from textiles to automobile parts and automobiles themselves? Has this government done impact studies, sector by sector? If so, will it make them available to the members of this House?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for his question, the first part of which is one of the finest he has asked in this House.

I should tell my hon. friend that in a conversation this morning with President de Klerk of South Africa, I conveyed the congratulations of all members of the House of Commons for the excellence of his courageous leadership in bringing this about.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: As my hon. friend points out, it was on Canada's behalf, with the Commonwealth, a lonely battle from time to time and the government was sustained throughout by the overwhelming majority of the House of Commons. This was a policy that was consistently followed by successive governments over many years and I think it says something about some of the fundamental values of this country of which we can all be proud.

With regard to the less elegant part of the question, my hon. friend asks about the North American free trade negotiations that are presently ongoing. My understanding is that there was the offer of a full briefing for my hon. friend and others tomorrow.

Ms. Copps: Secret.

Mr. Mulroney: No, it is not secret. My hon. friend says it is secret. It is not secret. How could it be secret if we offer to brief the hon. member?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mulroney: That is an oxymoron, but I invite my hon. friend to come to the briefing. He will find that the Government of Canada will be full and forthcoming in its sharing of information. I look forward to having the opportunity of briefing my hon. friend and then having the House get the benefit of his views thereafter.

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is making an offer to committee members that they are free to discuss anything they heard in the briefing, I will accept the offer. However, if the conditions remain that we are sworn to confidentiality, when I am sworn to confidentiality, I keep my word. Therefore, I will not go into a secret meeting, sworn to confidentiality.

I asked the Minister for International Trade a specific question about impact studies. My next question is also for the Minister for International Trade. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur in the United States Congress has made a thorough study of the impact of NAFTA on the United States economy. She has determined that over 100,000 jobs have been lost in the U.S. automobile industry alone, many of them shifting to Mexico. General Motors has recently decided to shift the Moraine Engine Plant to Mexico with a loss to the United States of some 1,000 jobs.

I ask this government whether or not it too has done any specific studies. Has it heard or seen from General Motors that their over-all strategy is quietly to shift its production to Mexico while the negotiations are going on and at the end of the negotiations *voilà*, be almost out of Canada, significantly out of the United States, with the jobs all going to Mexico because of the North American free trade agreement?

• (1430)

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, let me just comment on my hon. friend's point on the access that we have offered members of Parliament with regard to negotiations on the North American free trade agreement.

The committee members, through the committee chairman, came to the government and requested access to the document and the opportunity to have briefings. We, as consistent with the United States and Mexico, have offered confidential briefings to the committee members. It was on that basis that the offer was made.