

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE—STEEL
LABELLING PROVISIONS OF UNITED STATES. (B) REQUEST FOR
RETALIATION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place this evening with great regret because the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has chosen to ignore the very critical issue of steel labelling, and the Prime Minister's representative here tonight, I hope, will be able to tell the House, and in particular the workers in my riding of Hamilton East and the workers in ridings across Hamilton, just what initiatives this Government has in mind with respect to the steel labelling issue.

The Prime Minister is no doubt aware that during the election he personally thought this issue was so important that he sent letters to constituents across my riding urging them to support the Progressive Conservative Party because he would personally lead the fight to save steel jobs. Yet we have seen, since the election of this Government, a Prime Minister who treats the issue of steel jobs and the labelling issue with the same kind of lack of interest and denigration with which he has treated a number of other very serious subjects explored in this House.

I was frankly shocked, when I raised an issue which involved the lay-off and the potential lay-off of more than 2,000 steelworkers in Hamilton, that the Prime Minister was not even aware that the current labelling requirements as passed by the U.S. Congress are a violation of GATT.

Will the Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade (Mr. Kelleher) clarify to this House whether the International Trade Minister—who has already stated publicly that the labelling requirements are a non-tariff area and thus a violation of GATT—is speaking for the Government or whether it is the Prime Minister who is doing so. I understood that the Prime Minister, in his completely inadequate response to my question on this issue this week, was unclear whether the labelling issue was a violation of GATT. I would support the statement by the Minister for International Trade that the labelling provisions is a violation of GATT and that the Prime Minister has an obligation to the voters of my community and to the steel workers across Canada, including the steel workers in Sault Ste. Marie who are watching this issue very closely, as well as steel workers in other parts of the country. The Prime Minister has an obligation to get tough with the Americans and he has an obligation to suggest to his very good and great friend, the President of the United States, that if the U.S. Congress is not prepared to exempt Canada or to lift the labelling requirements with respect to steel imports, then it is time that the Canadian Government followed the initiative suggested by the steel industry, and that is, with retaliatory measures.

The Prime Minister in the House talked about retaliatory rhetoric. He joked. He threw the question off into oblivion because he felt it was not an issue that should be dealt with seriously by parliamentarians here in the House and by the people of Canada. I would like a clarification from the Prime Minister as to whether he believes that the labelling require-

Adjournment Debate

ments are a violation of GATT. If he believes, as does his Minister for International Trade, that they are a violation of GATT, why does the Prime Minister not shrink back from the commitment he made to the electorate of Hamilton East when he said that if he were successful in becoming the Prime Minister of this country he would personally lead the fight to save steel jobs?

We know that over 2,000 jobs are already on the line as a result of a downturn in steel production since the election of this Government. More than 2,000 people in my community have already been laid off or are facing a potential lay-off in January of next year. Yet, faced with this, the Prime Minister stands in the House of Commons and laughs and jokes and tells the workers, who are looking forward to a very bleak Christmas, that he does not have answers. He is only concerned with retaliatory rhetoric.

The response of the Prime Minister is not sufficient. I am sorry the Prime Minister is not in the House tonight to deal with an issue that involves the potential loss of thousands of jobs for Canadian steel workers. I ask that his representative clarify the GATT requirements and clarify the position that this Government is taking. Will he clarify to the Canadian voters why the Prime Minister did not see fit personally to intervene with the President of the United States after the United States Congress introduced the tariff regulations which are in violation of GATT?

• (1805)

These are very serious questions. The voters of Hamilton want answers to these questions. The Prime Minister's comic relief in the House earlier this week is certainly not good enough.

Mr. Stewart McInnes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to reply to the Hon. Member's question on behalf of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Kelleher).

The Government submitted a note to the U.S.A. administration on October 1 identifying the proposed marking regulation affecting steel pipes and fittings, which was contained in the draft U.S.A. Trade and Tariff Act of 1984, as a serious non-tariff barrier to Canadian exports and inconsistent with U.S. obligations under the GATT. Our Ambassador in Washington also wrote to key Congressmen and met with administration officials outlining our concerns over the new marking law.

After passage of the legislation by Congress on October 9, the Government submitted another note setting out our concerns. We also made representations to the U.S. administration on the technical aspects. A further note was submitted on November 1 after the Bill was signed into law. In this representation, we sought the least restrictive application of the marking regulation, while pressing for repeal of the legislation when Congress reconvenes in 1985. In addition, the