

Supply

The U.S. administration, Congress and, indeed, the American people, have taken the nature of their relationship with this country for granted because of the signals consistently given by the Prime Minister since his election in September of 1984. Friendship is based on respect. It was certainly not an act of respect for Canada or, indeed, for the Prime Minister personally, when a tariff measure to the extent of 35 per cent was taken against cedar shakes and shingles without, in the Prime Minister's own words, "any personal notification", although one would have to be lacking in all senses not to see it coming.

The Government of Canada has to begin the process of spending less of its time preoccupied in an incestuous manner with Canadian public opinion. It has to begin the process of sensitizing not only the U.S. administration and Congress but, indeed, the American people, to the grave nature of the threat against Canada's interests which is implied by this threatened tariff on softwood lumber. That cannot happen by Members of Parliament talking to each other in the House of Commons in Ottawa. It cannot happen by sending three Members of Parliament to a farcical meeting for a photo opportunity to be used back home. It cannot happen by the Prime Minister saying that the very nature of free trade talks are threatened and the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Kelleher) saying: "Free trade talks are going ahead, come what may". It cannot happen when the Prime Minister can take a 35 per cent tariff on cedar shakes and shingles as a matter of personal vanity, a personal attack, in his letter to the President, rather than a question of the jobs and security of 4,000 workers.

I say to the Government that it ought to take seriously this motion which reflects the views of Canadians who are incensed that our ship is adrift without a rudder and certainly without a captain at the helm.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I am happy the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) introduced the issue of the "Dear Ron" letter which the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in a very egomaniacal fashion wrote to the President, in essence, to seek his forgiveness for his own outburst in the House of Commons. I wonder if the Hon. Member could tell us, given the statement by the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Kelleher) today that the Government knew for some time of the potential of a further action on softwood lumber, what he thinks about the Prime Minister's commitment to the softwood lumber industry when he did not even mention it in his infamous "Dear Ron" letter, apparently because he did not want to sever his own "personal" good relationship with the President?

● (1250)

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I said a moment ago, and I think most Canadians would agree, that some kind of mutual respect for each other often leads to good friendship. Most of us have neighbours on the other side of the fence, and someone once said that good fences make good neighbours.

When the Prime Minister, Canada's chief executive officer, writes a rare letter—because personal letters are not

exchanged every day between Presidents and Prime Ministers—just a few days before the Minister for International Trade had the Canadian Ambassador in Washington and three Members of Parliament down in Washington supposedly making the last ditch attempt at preventing the petition from proceeding on softwood lumber—if the Minister for International Trade's initiative through the use of the Canadian Ambassador and through the abuse, I say, of three Members of Parliament was serious—then surely the Prime Minister would have reflected the seriousness of that attempt in his letter to the President. Instead, there is not a single utterance, not a reference, not an acknowledgement of the existence of that industry or its importance to our citizens in the letter.

I believe the Prime Minister's biggest problem is that he has never stopped the election campaign of 1984. He is forever on the election trail, worried more about tomorrow's headlines than about today's reality. I think we have paid a heavy price for that attitude.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fontaine: Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak, following the speech by the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin). I think he shows great courage in being prepared to defend the interests of the western part of this country, as a Member from our eastern shores. This is indeed a rare occurrence. So the Liberal Party is starting to show some consideration for Western Canada—thinking about the next election campaign, may be? In years past, it seemed routine for the Liberals to forget that the West existed. This morning, it might have been more appropriate for the Hon. Member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Turner) to defend the interests of the residents of his province. However, I noticed that the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe was alone amid the vacant seats reserved for the Liberal caucus. The other Members were probably still at their weekend conference. I would like to ask the Hon. Member whether, in 1983, when—

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. The Hon. Member should not indicate who is and who is not in the House. I bring that to his attention. I know that he is a fairly new Member of Parliament, but I hope he will not do it again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fontaine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Hon. Member why his Government did not deal with the problem we are discussing today in 1983. Why did they leave it up to us? They could have dealt with it for good. If the Hon. Member was also able to take a more general view of the problem, why did he fail to mention a trip made by our Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to Japan, a trip that proved the quality of our lumber, because during that trip he made representations to the Japanese Government, asking it to include the use of our Canadian lumber in the standards set by agencies comparable to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation here in Canada. The Liberals never mentioned that.