

Oral Questions

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is fully aware that our case is continuing before the trade tribunal. He should be aware that that process has not resolved the problem in the past. This issue has been constantly before fact-finding committees, trade tribunals, other institutions and it has not resolved the problem.

We made our only offer to the Americans and, as expected, that offer has been rejected in part by the American producers. At the same time they have said that they wish further information. It is a package supplied by the four provinces concerned. Today our officials are meeting to find out exactly what concerns were identified by the U.S. producers who brought the action against us. We are willing to supply further information to the industry but we are not prepared to enter into negotiations on this issue before October 9.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I would only say that the Hon. Minister has just compounded her initial confusion by saying that it was a final and only offer, but now we are back negotiating another final and only offer. What in God's name is she trying to do? Where is the trade strategy of the Government? Why are we going outside the general trade talks to negotiate these separate issues? When will the Minister establish a clear and cohesive approach to trade for this country?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, there is no confusion about the Canadian position. The Canadian position is aimed at saving thousands and thousands of jobs in our biggest industry. We are taking that position with the firm support of the provinces, the firm backing of the industry involved, and with the support of the labour union involved. This has been made clear to the Hon. Member.

CANADIAN PROPOSAL ON SOFTWOOD LUMBER EXPORTS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister and also concerns the matter of jobs in the same sector. Not many months ago in Washington, with great fanfare the Canadian Government released hundreds of pounds of documentation allegedly proving beyond any reasonable doubt that our softwood lumber was going into the United States without any subsidy whatsoever. At that time the Secretary of State for External Affairs properly cautioned Canadians not to comment, not to discuss, not to change the proposal because it would undermine what was being argued before the tribunal. Is the Prime Minister aware that when the Minister for International Trade made her proposal on Tuesday of this week, it completely contradicted what the Secretary of State for External Affairs said should be done, and risked 25,000 Canadian jobs?

• (1125)

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, what changed between the position in June and the position in September was the industry's position. In June the industry was prepared to maintain the position it had in 1983. In August and September it was not. It is worried about the job impact of possible tariffs against industries and their towns, as a lot of New Democratic Party Members know. So what has changed in the position between June and the position in August and September is that the industry, with the support of the union involved, asked us to try to seek an out of court settlement. That is what we are doing. It is not helpful for the NDP to be undermining jobs in British Columbia.

Mr. Broadbent: I say to the Minister that it is she who changed her position, who undermined her case that we were assured in this House not many months ago was completely irrefutable. She has now sent another signal to the tribunal which is considering the case that she no longer has confidence in the case put by the Government of Canada. She is undermining once again the case she should be putting.

IDAHO SENATOR'S STATEMENT

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): I could provide a whole list of Americans who have said in the last 24 hours that the Government's case now lacks any credibility. Specifically I want to ask the Minister about this comment put forward by the Senator from Idaho who said:

Their proposal is a *de facto* admission that they are engaged in unfair trade practices.

Does the Minister agree with that? If so, I ask her again why she is risking thousands of Canadian jobs?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): We are moving to save thousands of Canadian jobs, a lot of them in British Columbia. I make the point that the Hon. Member does not seem to understand, that when we won this case before it did not resolve the problem. We have had this case before us for about five or six years, creating a lot of uncertainty, a lot of harassment, affecting investment decisions and worrying a lot of people in Canada.

What we have done, with the support of the provinces, the industry, the labour union, and the U.S. administration, which is also trying to seek a pragmatic response to this problem, is to resolve the problem on a permanent basis and to protect this industry and these jobs from continual harassment.

[Translation]

DETERMINATION OF CULPABILITY

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I would like to know exactly what the federal Government's policy is on this very important issue. The American senator said that the Government's decision on Thursday represented an admission of the Canadian Government's guilt. And now for my question.