

Oral Questions

provide some kind of payment to bring them up to the cost of production?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member raises a question which has been developing and looming for the last number of years. I think he should be giving Canada credit for taking the lead in bringing about discussions to resolve this matter.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): It is about time you did something.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mayer: We had a chance to sit down in Vancouver yesterday with the five major grain exporters and to use the initiative which our Prime Minister took to the Tokyo Summit to be on the table with grain trade related matters. That was very useful to us in our discussions yesterday and I believe we made some progress yesterday.

Mr. Axworthy: Like what? Give us an example.

GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, why is it that a valuable and highly productive agricultural sector has to wait so long for some action from the Government when bankers and takeover artists can get billions of dollars within a couple of weeks? The Canadian farmers have been waiting for six months for a commitment.

Some Hon. Members: Right on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Benjamin: That's their priority.

Mr. Rodriguez: Explain that, Charlie.

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, the farmers in this country know full well that they have not waited a long time for action. We have taken action very quickly on behalf of Canadian agriculture.

Mr. Rodriguez: Like what?

Mr. Mayer: In the 1985 calendar year the Government provided approximately \$1.5 billion as direct support for western agriculture. The Minister of Finance found some additional money to relieve taxes on farm fuel.

Mr. Hovdebo: They are still going broke, Charlie.

Mr. Mayer: That has definitely helped, and we are assisting producers in other areas as well as evidenced by the meeting which we were able to host yesterday in Vancouver.

TRADE

U.S. TARIFF ON CANADIAN CEDAR SHAKES AND SHINGLES—
EFFECT ON EMPLOYMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. The Government is incompetently fanning the flames of a trade war with the United States. It is clear from arguments of the Minister of Finance and the Secretary of State for External Affairs today that they are using that situation to frighten Canadians into believing that the only solution is a comprehensive trade agreement with the United States. This country cannot win a trade war with the United States, nor will it solve the problem of 4,000 lost jobs in British Columbia.

What specific action has the Government taken, either by way of persuading the President to revoke that tariff or otherwise, to save those 4,000 jobs in British Columbia? That is the issue that the people are really interested in.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition was late in coming to Question Period and perhaps was not here when that question was asked by the Member for Kamloops—Shuswap.

Ms. Copps: He never got an answer.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I outlined the range of steps we have taken.

With regard to the allegation, which is designed to create fear in the country, that there is a trade war between Canada and the United States, there is no such thing. There is a trade war in the United States between protectionists and those who are against protectionism. There is a real risk to Canada in that conflict in the U.S. That is why it is so essential that the Government of Canada do its duty. We are delighted that the Premiers of this country are prepared to work with us, even if the Opposition is not, so that the Government of Canada does its duty to try to get a better arrangement to protect Canadian interests.

• (1440)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, it is a rather weak explanation to justify unbelievable incompetence. They have just launched a tariff war with the United States.

ALLEGED LOSS OF 4,000 JOBS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Under these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister. What does the Government intend to do to save the 4,000 jobs in British Columbia? What was the original reason for this situation? Tell us what specific action was taken?