

Oral Questions

Commerce concerning the auto pact. Bearing in mind the minister's statements to the House on Monday that a short-term solution to the auto pact trade deficit is unlikely, can the minister assure the House that his pessimism does not extend to the longer term prospects for the auto pact trade, particularly in light of predictions made by the president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association to the effect that the deficit is likely to become even greater.

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, that deficit will start diminishing rapidly as soon as the United States market returns to near normal conditions.

Mr. Lawrence: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Am I to understand that the minister is assuring the House that once automotive sales in the United States improve, the deficit in Canada will begin to decrease?

Mr. Gillespie: Yes, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. member would look at the figures he would see that last year Canadian export sales to the United States increased. The reason we have the deficit is that our imports increased even more. Why? Because the Canadian economy was a lot stronger than the U.S. economy.

Mr. Baldwin: That does not quite tally with what the Minister of Finance said recently.

● (1420)

Mr. Lawrence: Having looked at the figures and realizing that Canada has endured more deficits than surpluses under the auto pact, is the minister now prepared or when will he be prepared to tell us what longer term programs his government proposes to make so that the automotive trade will be more advantageous to Canada than it is now or has been, according to his own department's statistics?

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I again remind the hon. member that it might be useful for him to review the figures on investment in Canada since the auto pact was introduced. He should look at the numbers with respect to employment increase in Canada compared with the employment increase in the United States. He will find that our performance has been considerably ahead of the United States. Notwithstanding the problems which the hon. member referred to in the parts industry market in the United States, my department has a number of programs under way aimed at trying to find new markets outside the United States for parts made by Canadian automobile parts manufacturers.

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AGRICULTURE**DISPARITY BETWEEN FARM AND INDUSTRIAL INCOME—
GOVERNMENT ACTION TO ACHIEVE EQUITY**

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. As the average farm income has consistently been lower than the average industrial composite, and in view of the minister's statement in London on April 11 that "no farmer will get rich

[Mr. Lawrence.]

from our stabilization plans or government policies", is it government policy that this disparity should continue?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, no farmer has asked me to develop a get-rich-quick plan. They have asked for a reasonable income with any plan we provide. That is what we intend to do.

Mr. Korchinski: Are there any plans to provide equity for all Canadians and at the same time improve the economic position of the farmer, in view of the minister's statement and the fact that the farm sector gets fewer subsidy dollars than most other sectors and that tariff protection is only half that of the non-agricultural sector?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, the last part of the hon. member's question, that the agricultural sector gets less tariff protection than the industrial sector, is correct. It averages about 8 per cent whereas the industrial sector averages about 16 per cent protection on imports into Canada.

Mr. Korchinski: I know what I said. I want to know what the minister is going to do.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, an awful lot depends on parliament, not just the Minister of Agriculture, as to how quickly we get the legislation passed in order that it will benefit the farmers of Canada. I might say the provinces are waiting for it, too.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**SUGGESTION FISHERMEN BE MADE ELIGIBLE FOR BENEFITS—
GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In view of the fact the government's promised income support policy for fishermen has been deferred and may be postponed indefinitely, will there be changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act to make it more applicable to fishermen because the existing act is of no use to fishermen, certainly in the Atlantic area?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, with regard to employed fishermen as contrasted to self-employed fishermen, we are examining the applicability and equitability of the act. I must confirm to the hon. member that this has to be done, and is in fact being done, in compatibility with discussions with my colleague, the Minister of State (Fisheries). When a program including the possibility of any change in unemployment insurance is decided upon, and this is not a foregone conclusion, it will be made known in the usual way.