

Oral Questions

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to misleading, we can take lessons from the Hon. gentleman himself because we heard a lot of that during the last election campaign.

I might remind the Hon. Member that our trade laws are in place as are the U.S. trade laws. At the present time we have a countervail against U.S. corn, so we are applying our law in a similar manner. If we think there are unfair trading practices, we have the laws in place and the mechanisms in place to protect our producers. We are going to fight this issue because we believe that on the point of law at issue here we are on solid ground.

[*Translation*]

LOSSES SUFFERED BY PORK PRODUCERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Minister of Agriculture.

I wish the Minister would explain why this action was taken on January 5, five days after the Free Trade Agreement was ratified, and I would like to ask the Minister what he has to say to hog producers who are already losing money when they sell at 53 cents or 54 cents a pound. How can he explain those additional three and a half cents? And how are producers going to react to this loss? What can they do to make up for it?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member better get his facts together because there is not a 3.5 cent per pound countervail duty being assessed right now. That is a preliminary determination. We are fighting it, and it is not being paid at the present time.

[*Translation*]

AID TO PORK PRODUCERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary.

The threat of a three and a half cent levy hangs over the heads of all Québec hog producers. The Minister of State spent all last year promising Quebec producers free access to the U.S. market, when he told hog producers: There is no problem; you can sell on the U.S. market without any surtax. But what about today? How can they still tell producers there is no problem? There is a problem. Forty-five days from now, they will have to save enough money to pay that surtax.

So there is a real loss of three and a half cents. What will the Government offer producers to make up for that?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I will talk about secure access. We are the largest exporter of pork into the United States market. We enjoy that market, and we are going to continue to have it.

There will be trade disputes that arise from time to time, but under the Free Trade Agreement we have another opportunity under the dispute resolving mechanism to deal with this issue in a fair and equitable way. That is something we did not have before.

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• (1540)

AGRICULTURE

SOIL CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister knows that there is a tremendous need, particularly in southern Saskatchewan, right across the Prairies for assistance in the soil conservation program.

The Minister also knows that an agreement has been sitting on his desk, an agreement between the Province of Saskatchewan and the federal Government. Is the Minister prepared to tell the House and the farmers of Saskatchewan whether that agreement is to be signed and when he will make that announcement?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the farmers of Saskatchewan will be glad to note that the Hon. Member is concerned about soil and water conservation and the adequate provision of water in the Province of Saskatchewan. I am sure the farmers out there will be very happy about that.

It is true that we do have a soil and water conservation program which was announced in December 1987. We have been working with the provinces in a joint arrangement to put together projects that would be suitable under the provisions of that policy. Yes, there have been ongoing discussions with the Province of Saskatchewan, and there is a proposal before us now that we are examining very closely. As soon as we can get through the process of examining it to ensure that it complies with all the criteria, we will take the necessary action.