

Oral Questions

Brunswickers is a direct result of transfer payments, I move, seconded by the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Hare):

That this House instructs the government to co-operate with the provinces in the establishment of a national industrial policy.

Mr. Speaker: Such a motion can be presented at this time only with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AGRICULTURE

NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNITED STATES ON TARIFFS

Mr. John Wise (Elgin): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture; it relates to the government's recent announcement on tariff changes. In light of the fact tariff reductions were instituted, to use the minister's words, "only after extremely complex negotiations with the United States", I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture, what reciprocal concessions has the government been able to obtain from our United States competitors?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member surely knows that there is a long list. I will send him a complete briefing on it so that he can understand in complete detail just what was done, because the Tariff Board recommendations are shown. It shows what the present tariffs are between our two countries; it shows the harmonization between our two countries; it shows the gains we made in respect of some of our products and some of the products they have in their country as well. It is a lengthy list, Mr. Speaker.

● (1410)

Mr. Wise: I have a supplementary question for the same minister, Mr. Speaker. I will be looking forward to that long list. I only hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Agriculture does not send it by Canada Post.

In view of the minister's recent statements to the horticultural seminar held recently in Ottawa, urging Canadians to drink Canadian apple juice and Canadian grape juice, why has he allowed the tariff on apple juice to be slashed by one-half, and why has he allowed the tariff on grape juice to be removed completely? Is this another example of the Minister of Agriculture saying one thing and taking one position, with his cabinet colleagues doing something the very opposite?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member sees the document I talked about, he will learn also that this is beneficial to the Canadian producer because on many occasions we have had surplus grape products and we were unable

[Mr. Corbett.]

to ship them to the United States. When the member says one-half, certainly he could be a little bit more liberal than that, in that I believe the amount he was talking about was one cent a quart on apple juice. The Canadian apple producers are well aware of this and well aware of the discussions. That is within the realm of the Tariff Board report also.

I am just saying this, that the hon. member seems to be trying to get the point across that this may not be beneficial to the Canadian horticultural industry. I cannot think of one delegate who understood the total package on tariff gains and tariff reductions who would not say that this is probably the most beneficial package to the Canadian horticultural industry ever presented on behalf of the Canadian horticultural industry, and I might say it is beneficial to this country too, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wise: Mr. Speaker, I will be waiting for the minister's written response to my second question. My final supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture.

In view of the very insignificant impact these reductions will have on the retail prices of fresh fruits and vegetables, does the minister not agree that the best way to lower food costs would be to lower farm input costs? Has the minister considered lowering the tariffs on imported agricultural commodities and chemicals, in view of the fact that with increases estimated as high as 30 per cent, the Canadian producer will have no protection whatsoever with regard to the 1979 crop season?

Mr. Whelan: Again, Mr. Speaker, I can show the hon. member a whole list in this regard. We have a review board, or a committee of producers, farmers and government people who investigate the prices of commodities. Many of the commodities here are quite reasonably priced. They have been subject to the nominal increases, in just the same as any other business in Canada.

We can show the hon. member that the costs in respect of many of the commodities that are volume items, such as the product to control wild oats, are much lower than they were last year. That cost is 10 per cent lower than it was last year, which I suggest is significant in these inflationary times.

SURTAX REQUESTED BY HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Agriculture. Having regard to the negotiations that have been conducted both bilaterally and multilaterally, will the minister explain why the concession asked for by the horticultural industry, namely, the ability to add additional duties in times of emergency, was not negotiated successfully for the Canadian farmer and his production, which is often badly affected by the importation of unreasonably low-priced goods from countries all over the world? What became of the surtax they asked for?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, again we announced that the surtax was not finalized at this