

Oral Questions

million over the next five years, Manitoba is now well positioned to reap substantial benefits from this new and exciting growth industry.

Along with the Health Science Centre of the University of Manitoba and the Centre for Disease Control, this new research centre will elevate Winnipeg into one of the world's premier centres for medical research.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to remind the House that yesterday Mr. Vic Peters and his rink won the national curling championship, so that is number two for Manitoba this year.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

TRADE

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

There is a report in today's *London Free Press* about a speech made Saturday by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. At a meeting of the Progressive Conservative Campus Association at the University of Western Ontario, the minister said that Canada would be better off to wait a few years before signing a North American free trade deal.

I want to ask the Acting Prime Minister: Is this the position that the government will be taking when the Prime Minister has his telephone conversations with Presidents Bush and Salinas, that Canada does not want to sign a trade deal at this time?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I read the same article in the *London Free Press* this morning. I must admit that I was surprised to find myself in it, based on what I actually said.

The point that I was making to the students in response to a question was that it would always be very nice to do things in boxes, to do the free trade agreement, to do GATT, to do the NAFTA in a little box, but that is not the way life works. I never in any instance called for a delay in the agreement because these negotiations are going to lead to more jobs for Canadians and better trading arrangements throughout North America.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, in the statement to the students the minister said that

the federal government is "happy to be involved, but I would like it to have come a little later when the country is in better economic shape".

I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether in his conversations with Presidents Salinas and Bush the Prime Minister will be asking them to delay the deal until the country is in better economic shape, as his colleague has suggested, or is he in fact taking another different secret tack?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, first of all that is not what I said. The hon. member is reading from a newspaper article. There is some semblance of accuracy in this, but they have missed the main point of what I was saying. The point that I was making was that the greater trading relationship will be of assistance in providing jobs for Canadians and in growth in this economy.

I continue to stand by that and so does the government.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, I spoke to the reporter and he stands by his story. It will be interesting to see who is actually telling the truth in this one.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Some hon. members: Order.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Copps: Even the Secretary of State for External Affairs has admitted it is not the right time to sign this three-way trade agreement. Furthermore, the Prime Minister must be aware of the GATT report which says that today, regional trade agreements are weakening the global trading system.

• (1420)

How can the Prime Minister be so obsessed with signing another agreement with the United States and Mexico that he would ignore the GATT report and the interests of Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Madam Speaker, it is well known that the Government of Canada has always supported the GATT system. However, that does not mean that we are not prepared to proceed with the free trade agreement, the new NAFTA, because we believe that trading agreements, particularly if we can carry over things from the FTA into GATT, are bound to be good for the whole world, not just Canada.