

Oral Questions

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that my friend opposite would have known better than to ask such a fallacious question. He indicated that we would take more than 25 per cent of the income of fishermen. That is not necessarily true, at all. The fishermen of Newfoundland were put in a certain category by the former Liberal Minister of Revenue. I am sure he did it with all best intentions. All Members from that province were consulted, as were other people.

Mr. Tobin: But we did not agree.

Mr. MacKay: I assure the House and my hon. friend opposite that I will personally, as will my Department, exercise great sensitivity to the problems of Newfoundland fishermen who are, as are other fishermen—

Mr. Tobin: You are out of the fat and into the fire, Elmer.

Mr. MacKay: —caught in an unfortunate position because of the cyclical nature of their profession.

DEPARTMENT'S TREATMENT OF FISHERMEN

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Revenue is not known for treating Canadians with compassion. How can fishermen feel confident when the ceiling which protected them has been removed? Right now they have no protection. How can the Minister expect those fishermen to feel very confident with that kind of response?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Hon. Member has forgotten that it was our Government which brought in the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights and brought in a whole new approach to treating taxpayers with equity and consulting with them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: Again I repeat for the Hon. Member and the House that there will be no insensitive or Draconian action taken. The fishermen of Newfoundland will be put on the same basis as all other fishermen. Their ability to pay and their personal circumstances will be carefully examined. If there are any instances of unfairness or Draconian measures, I invite the Hon. Member and other Members to let me know, because we will not put up with it.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

MARITIME FARMERS COUNCIL—FEED COST EQUALIZATION PROPOSAL

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. It concerns the feed cost equalization program requested by the Maritime Farmers Council. As the Minister knows, it is an important agricultural and regional development initiative.

The request was made of the Minister over a year ago. Would he indicate to the House why farmers in the maritime provinces have to wait so long before any action is taken on a request which will affect the lives of farmers and producers in the maritime region? Why this inordinate delay?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the Hon. Member's question and his interest in the subject. I have received numerous representations from Atlantic Canada agri-food organizations. I can only assure him that I fully understand and appreciate the difficulty in which they find themselves. I want to assure him that the program and the suggestions they have made are actively under consideration.

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT DECISION

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I say with sincerity to the Minister that that was not an answer. Farmers in the maritime provinces have been waiting since February of this year for an answer. Last March the Minister promised that he would get back to them soon, and in the subsequent months he has not provided an answer. Would he please tell the House and farmers in the maritime provinces when they can expect an affirmative answer to a very important regional development issue in those provinces? Why this delay?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. member would take the time to check the record he would see that the agricultural industry, not only in Atlantic Canada but across the country, was totally and completely ignored by the previous Government.

Mr. Dingwall: Don't mislead the House.

Mr. Wise: I want the Hon. Member to take the time to check the record.

Mr. Dingwall: It was your own Members.

Mr. Wise: The record will show that we have not ignored the agricultural industry anywhere in Canada.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ADMISSION OF CANADIAN REPAIR TECHNICIANS TO UNITED STATES

Mr. Bill Tupper (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The United States has closed its borders to personnel of Canadian companies who install or service products sold by Canadian companies in the U.S. after August 29, 1985. This problem is of great concern to high-technology companies in my riding, and to all manufacturers. Can the Minister tell the House what progress the Government is making in having this impediment removed?