

Oral Questions

Mr. Speller: Mr. Speaker, my question was about tomatoes. I will direct my supplementary to the Minister of Agriculture who represents farmers in this House, the same minister who promised Canadian farmers that free trade would be good for them. The minister should be aware that the farming industry and the food processing industry in Canada are under siege because of this free trade agreement.

Will the minister now tell the tomato farmers of southwestern Ontario what specific programs he has to help them with the loss of their livelihood because of this free trade agreement?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member were to look at the facts, he would find this past year the investment in the food processing sector has increased by some 15.4 per cent; 40 per cent in the bakery industry; 23 per cent in the cereal industry; 21 per cent in the biscuit manufacturing industry—

Mr. Allmand: What about tomatoes?

Mr. Mazankowski: —73 per cent in the red meat industry. When you go through the application of the free trade, Pillsbury is expanding, Canada Packers is expanding, General Foods is expanding, J.M. Schneider is expanding, MLM Flour Products is expanding, CSP is expanding, the meat processing is expanding, all because of free trade and a buoyant Canadian economy.

* * *

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. Yesterday, he and his minister of industry waxed eloquently and enthusiastically about the sale of Connaught BioSciences and Canadian R and D to France, and about the sale generally of Canadian industry to foreigners. Yet, his own national advisory board on science and technology has said that on R and D Canadian jobs depend and that “the high level of foreign ownership of Canada’s industries contributes to our low industrial R and D spending”.

Who really is timid and timorous, as the Prime Minister described yesterday, those of us who are con-

cerned about the Canadian future, or his government which refuses to act to protect Canadian R and D, Canadian jobs and the Canadian future?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out yesterday and have said before in the House, it is regrettable that Connaught was not able to find a Canadian suitor with which to join forces in order to ensure its future.

In fact, in the applications, we were able to obtain from both applicants for Connaught assurances that there would be very, very substantial increases in R and D, whichever suitor ended up controlling Connaught. We have those guarantees. It is in the press release which I am sure the hon. member has. In fact, the transaction will result in significant increases in research and development in this important area in Canada.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark’s Crossing): Mr. Speaker, my question is also about Connaught and it is directed to the Minister of Health. Connaught is the leading supplier of influenza vaccines in Canada. During the next imminent world-wide epidemic, it will be the only Canadian supplier capable of producing the five million or so doses needed here.

When Connaught was owned in Canada it responded to a health and welfare emergency request to supply vaccine sometime in 1976. I want to ask the Minister of Health, why did he fail to obtain a guarantee of supply in times of emergency from the foreign buyer of Connaught for such vaccines?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, one of the reasons why Connaught felt it was necessary to join forces with another suitor with deep pockets, as it were, was in order to ensure it had the processing capability to meet the demands for vaccines, including polio vaccines. The technology that Mérieux brings to these circumstances will help ensure that Connaught will be able to meet the demands of Canadians for polio vaccines and indeed for a whole host of other vaccines which are important to human health.