

Oral Questions

Canada in the future; rather, it simply provides us with a better means of defending ourselves in the future.

• (1440)

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, I was aware of that for a lot of years prior to this agreement, and it seems odd, after listening to the rhetoric of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Trade, that we still have to go to the GATT. They have been telling us with this agreement we would not have to do that any more. It appears that their lauded dispute settlement mechanism does not have any effect, which is what we on this side have been saying.

CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL POLICY—U.S. POSITION

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, during and since the negotiations the U.S. has continued to press for changes in our agricultural policy with regard to our marketing board system and our position on Article 11 of the GATT, while at the same time restricting our access to its markets through the omnibus Trade Bill and other measures.

What is the Government proposing to do to defend Canadian agricultural interests in the coming year, 1989?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, we have been debating the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement now for some 14 months. It has been stated repeatedly by us, and it is a fact, that of course GATT is still in existence. Canada and the U.S. both still belong to the GATT. As a matter of fact, I was a host to a GATT conference in Montreal about ten days ago where 96 countries of the GATT gathered together. I invited observers from the NDP and the Liberal Party and they did not attend. Perhaps that explains why there is some confusion here.

The U.S. has argued that our adding ice cream and yogurt to the import control list on January 28 last is inconsistent with our obligations under Article 11 of the GATT. The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement has nothing to do with it. It is not in effect yet. Even if it were, we still have GATT rights, as does the United States.

We are now going to the GATT with respect to the Americans' obtuseness in quibbling about our import controls on ice cream and yogurt when for 15 years they have not allowed us to export ice cream to the U.S. We are not putting up with that kind of treatment from the U.S. or anyone else.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD—PRICING AND MARKETING SYSTEM

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, it has not been clear from the negotiations thus far that Canada is pressing for a strengthened Article 11. Will the Government respond to the Prairie Pools' request for written assurances that the Wheat Board's pricing and marketing system will be protected under GATT or the FTA? Will it strengthen Article 11 so these marketing boards can continue to operate as they have for years and years?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the GATT has been in existence since 1947. I am not quite sure how long the Canadian Wheat Board has been in existence.

Mr. Mayer: Since 1935.

Mr. Crosbie: Since 1935. However, I can assure the hon. gentleman that Article 11 of the GATT is not going to be changed without our consent because there has to be consensus. All 96 countries would have to agree. We have no intention of agreeing to anything that would endanger the Canadian Wheat Board in any way, shape or form.

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[*Translation*]

CHARTER OF RIGHTS

USE OF NOTWITHSTANDING CLAUSE—POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. First, I would like to inform him that it is not the Government's position that we are disputing, but rather the contradictory position taken by his Secretary of State.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister to explain how his Government plans to play two fiddles at the same time and for how long. How can he say that he is against the notwithstanding clause, while his Secretary of State says that the clause is vital? Their statements are clearly contradictory; one does not need a dictionary to see that. One is against the clause and the other says it is vital. Might I remind the Prime Minister that, although he may have inherited the notwithstanding clause from his predecessor, it was he who appointed the