

Oral Questions

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member knows, the Government is committed to the most comprehensive and broad program dealing with the serious drug problem, by virtue of the fact of the establishment of the national drug strategy.

To set the record straight, I will quote very briefly from what I said last week: "We will be looking at all options available to us including the pros and cons of zero tolerance". I will not be dissuaded by anybody anywhere in looking at every possibility to reduce the use of illegal drugs in Canada.

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AIR CANADA**GOVERNMENT SHARES IN AIRLINE**

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance. In privatizing Air Canada, the first annual meeting of Air Canada shareholders was told last week that the chairman and president of the airline were receiving interest-free loans to buy 275,000 shares at the original price of \$8 per share. With these shares worth \$11.50 today, the profits for these two people will be over \$970,000, all based on interest-free loans.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance who votes the shares which the Government controls in Air Canada: Why was it that the Government did not vote its 55 per cent present share in Air Canada against these grossly generous benefits to two wealthy Canadians?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, the answer is very simple. In the prospectus that was presented to the Canadian people back some six and a half months ago, it was made very clear at that time to all the security commissions across this country that the Government of Canada, in its 55 per cent share of Air Canada, would not vote those shares. We have kept our commitment.

EFFECTS OF PRIVATIZATION OF AIRLINE

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister if he and the Government consider it fair and just that \$975,000 should be made in profit by two individuals at the top, while ordinary Canadians receive no interest-free loans and face in fact cuts in the service to their communities because of Air Canada's change to private ownership?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Hon. Member asked that question because it gives me the opportunity to tell Canadians that the initial issue of Air Canada went to 130,000 ordinary Canadians from coast to coast.

All provinces and all territories were represented as shareholders, over 130,000 of them. They are very happy with that opportunity. There will be an opportunity some time in the future for all Canadians to participate in more share issues in Air Canada.

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AGRICULTURE**FREE TRADE AGREEMENT—PORT EXPORTS**

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture.

During the last two and a half years, we have heard a great deal of bombast about securing our markets in the United States through the flawed one-sided trade deal. Could the Minister tell us what went wrong with secured access to the markets when the United States is allowed under its laws to slap Canadian pork producers with a penalty of 7.7 cents per kilogram on pork from Canada exported to the United States?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman knows that this issue was occurring before the Free Trade Agreement came into place. The countervail action was in fact being examined then. The preliminary determination of 3.5 cents per pound has been levied. It does not have to be paid, however, and the Government of Canada and the Minister for International Trade are fighting this issue. We believe that we are on solid ground.

ACCESS TO UNITED STATES MARKETS

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the United States trade remedy laws are still intact, that the omnibus trade bill was passed by the United States Congress in December, and that our access to the United States markets is no more secured now than it was five years ago, will the Minister admit that he misled the pork producers of Canada and that instead of negotiating a free trade deal he bought a pig in a poke?