

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES**DIOXINS—PAPER PRODUCTS—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare and concerns the presence of dioxins in paper products. Is the Minister aware of the studies showing that dioxins do not always stay in the paper, but in the case of paper coffee filters, for instance, that they also go into the coffee? At what risk are Canadians being put by the presence of dioxins and what is the Minister doing in co-operation with the Minister of the Environment about this problem?

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the details the Hon. Member has raised. It is referred to as dioxin migration. When the Hon. Member for York East asked me questions about this earlier in the fall the interdepartmental committee, which I mentioned again today, was struck, and studies are being developed. There have been studies in the U.S. as well and I believe a report is due to be released on the 15th of this month.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT USE UNBLEACHED PAPER

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware that this problem is being dealt with better in other countries by changing the industrial process used in making pulp and paper? As well, in Sweden, for example, the Government set an example by using unbleached paper. Would the Minister get his Government to set an example, and you, Mr. Speaker, for the House, so that as consumers we could be helping the process by switching to natural unbleached paper that would be dioxin free?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of that. However, the Hon. Member should go back to the answer I gave earlier in the fall on this issue. I said at that time I was not questioning whether there were safer methods. That evidence has yet to come forward. That is why studies are being done, to verify that.

She should also understand, obviously, that there is scientific thought on both sides of the question. We want to opt for the safest method and that is why the interdepartmental study and the need for that data.

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TRADE**WEST COAST FISH EXPORTS—GATT PRELIMINARY RULING**

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister for International Trade and concerns the second round of negotiations just concluded with the U.S.

On the question of the West Coast fishery the Minister said in the House today that matter is before GATT. She well knows that under the GATT rules, after a preliminary ruling, it is open to the parties to the dispute to withdraw, negotiate, or change the application. In other words, it was possible, and certainly desirable, through negotiations to have the U.S. withdraw its application to GATT.

Given that, why did the Government of Canada not explicitly ask the U.S., referring to the stand-still provision and others, to withdraw its application to GATT? Under the rules that is perfectly permissible, desirable, necessary, and encouraged. Why did the Government of Canada neglect to make that demand or request of the U.S.?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member will have to wait until we get the final text to see in what way this issue has been resolved. The final details and the actual wording and is being addressed by the lawyers today. We hope to have their report before us.

• (1500)

It strains the credibility of anyone on this issue to think that the Americans, having won this case in the GATT, would be prepared to give it up in the GATT. We are following the solutions in the GATT. Since the Hon. Member is such a fan and supporter of the GATT and believes to the depths of his soul in the GATT, he should be happy that the two parties are dealing with this before the GATT in the context of the rules which are in force.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, we support the rules of the GATT when those rules are applied. Considering that the Government did not follow those rules on softwood lumber, that would be a useful precedent of which to remind our American neighbours.

CANADA-UNITED STATES TRADE AGREEMENT—DEADLINE FOR SIGNING

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister for International Trade. Last week the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and the Chairman of the Finance Committee in the United States wrote to Secretary of the Treasury Baker saying that they do not intend to deal with the legislation dealing with the Canada-U.S. trade pact until June and will, in fact, be considering the omnibus trade Bill prior to consideration of the trade agreement between Canada and the United States.

Why are we signing, on January 2, a commitment by this country to a trade arrangement with the United States before we know what is in the omnibus trade Bill, knowing that that omnibus trade Bill contains many discriminatory, punitive trade measures against Canada which will be entrenched in the trade agreement if it is passed prior to Congress accepting the Canada-U.S. trade deal?