

Oral Questions

DOMESTIC PRICE FOR WHEAT

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, it does not mean anything of the sort. It means that because of the quality of Canadian product, particularly canola, we will have a chance—and the Americans have said that by agreeing that they will not invoke Section 22 of their Agricultural Securities Act—at a multibillion dollar market in the United States.

The Hon. Member should know, because he comes from an area which produces very high quality oilseed, that Canada presently has less than half of one per cent of that market.

We have the capacity, the knowledge, the people, and the product. We have everything that is needed to increase our market there, except we have not had to date an assuredness that the market will be open.

This agreement gives us that assuredness, and it gives us very much of a future for our oilseed industry on the Prairies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

POWERS OF CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade, although she does not seem to be answering many questions today.

Canadians know that the Government has sold out farmers by removing all tariffs, by reducing quotas, and by removing transportation subsidies. Why has the Government taken away the power of the Canadian Wheat Board to restrict imports of wheat, oats, and barley?

Could the Minister explain why this power of the Canadian Wheat Board, which is essential to it continuing its invaluable role to Canadian farmers, has been taken away by this agreement?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member should know that this agreement does absolutely nothing of the sort. It preserves our import permitting responsibilities. It maintains the integrity of the Canadian Wheat Board for exports. It keeps the ability of the Canada Grain Commission to preserve our licensing agreement and our varietal distinctions, which are second to none around the world.

It gives the Canadian Wheat Board a chance to be truly competitive in the American market with our wheat.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mayer: They laugh at the quality of Canadian wheat. They should talk to some of our American customers. They like the quality of our spring wheat. They like the quality of our Durum wheat for pasture products. This agreement will give the Canadian Wheat Board a chance to sell unfettered in that market, which is good news for western farmers.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows that if we take away the power of the Canadian Wheat Board to limit imports of wheat, oats, and barley from the United States, we destroy the power of the Canadian Government to have a domestic price for wheat.

The domestic price for wheat has provided some \$300 million per year in benefits to Canadian farmers. Why has the Government taken away the power to provide that much benefit to Canadian western farmers?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member should know that this agreement does absolutely nothing of the sort.

Mr. Axworthy: Oh, yes it does.

Mr. Foster: Read Yeutter's statement.

Mr. Mayer: They laugh, but they should listen to what it does. It provides that when support levels across the border equalize, import permit restrictions will be eliminated, which makes entirely good sense.

If Canada had the opportunity right now, we would sell in the American market where their support prices are higher. The Americans are preventing us from doing that.

Just to say it again, so that the Hon. Member understands, the agreement provides that the Americans will not reintroduce Section 22 of their Agricultural Adjustment Act which, up to now, has been like a lever over our heads so that we cannot sell into that market unfettered.

The Hon. Member should know that the Canadian Wheat Board is a very good sales agency. With the elimination of Section 22, as I said, it gives the Wheat Board a better chance to sell additional quantities of our high quality wheat in their market, which American consumers would very much like to get.

FILM DISTRIBUTION INDUSTRY—FILM IMPORT LICENSING

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I should like to focus on the cultural area where the giveaways have been particularly devastating to Canadians—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member is laying the groundwork for a question. However, while these assertions are interesting, may very well be the subject of debate, and, may well be the tactics of debate, this is Question Period.

I would ask Hon. Members to respect the long-standing approach to questions in this place, that is, that the preamble should set the facts upon which the question is asked, not just be an assertion. As I said, I expect that Ministers when responding will exercise the same good sense.