

*Supply*

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say in conclusion that I hope this government will not be "all talk and no action".

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** We are now in the five-minute question and comment period. The hon. Minister of State for Agriculture.

**Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to carefully to my hon. colleague whose comments focused on several elements of the Canadian agricultural policy. He made some interesting points and I must say that I share his view completely, especially concerning the difference between the Canadian and American lifestyles. I think that we can only be in total agreement on that. I will tell him in jest, Mr. Speaker, that he should discuss the use of the expression "all talk, no action" with his colleague, the premier of Ontario. It might be of help to Mr. Rae in planning his policies for the future.

I would like to come back to a point the hon. member barely addressed and that is international trade. He described the free trade agreement with the United States as a major catastrophe. As my hon. colleague may be aware, statistics are available for the first two years after it was implemented and they show that, in the agrifood industry alone, Canadian exports to the States have increased by 30 per cent. In spite of his party's doom and gloom predictions, free trade has contributed to bringing our trade balance with the United States down from \$700 million to \$300 million within two years. That is not bad. I just wanted to quote these figures to my hon. colleague for future reference.

I would like him to comment on this and to know if he still thinks, as I do, that the Canadian position at GATT—which he seems familiar with—accurately reflects the feelings of the Canadian farmers, provinces and government, in other words, if you and I fully support this position and that we have no reason to tear each other to shreds. Do we agree on that?

**Mr. Edmonston:** Mr. Speaker, I am always impressed by the statements made by this government, because those are really statements with which nobody can disagree. However, it is not with your words—

**Mr. Blais:** I have figures here.

**Mr. Edmonston:** I will get to those figures later, but I first want to talk about your words. Nobody can disagree with the government because it says things precisely so as to get the greatest possible approval from people. But we are somewhat concerned, and we do not make this up since this feeling prevails everywhere in Canada and in every farming sector, and the minister is well aware of that. The problem is that in these negotiations actions do not follow words, which is to say that you intend to say one thing but do another one.

The minister is asking me if I think he is a liar. Not at all. I think he is mistaken because I find that people in general believe the minister talks a lot but does little. That's all. I did not say that he was a "liar".

I want to say something important about figures. It is true that the agrifood industry, that is the whole agricultural sector in Canada, experienced an increase in its sales to the United States. That is a fact. But I can tell you today that in Quebec people who were so much in favour of free trade now realize that it was not in their best interest, and the majority of them are now opposed to free trade. That is a complete reversal of opinion. In fact, whether it is with Mexico or any other country, Quebecers are fed up of hearing the words "free trade". The only thing they know is that this free trade has created unemployment, even when the government talked about implementing a manpower training program, that is some kind of retraining to help workers who lost their jobs get some training for other positions. However, nothing happened.

• (1710)

So you better not talk about free trade in Quebec now because unlike in 1988, the majority of people no longer support free trade. I would like to say another thing to the minister that answered before—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** Order. The five minute period is up.

[*English*]

**Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan):** Mr. Speaker, until I heard the minister speak earlier this afternoon I retained some small degree of hope that perhaps the pessimists were wrong and Canada really was going to maintain its supply management system. I say "Canada", not the farmers but Canada itself. However, after listening to the minister, I fear that all is lost from that point of view.