

Oral Questions

That does not seem to me to be very equitable treatment for Atlantic Canada in comparison to its immediate neighbours to the west.

A supplementary question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. At the meeting in Alberta in July, every provincial minister of agriculture endorsed the proposal because they all knew full well that the Atlantic Canadian farmers were getting shafted.

Will the minister give an undertaking to this House that he will respond to the desperate need for feed freight assistance and put Atlantic Canada back on a level playing field, and will he assure us—and this is most important, Mr. Speaker—that this assistance will not be countervailable under this government's free trade agreement?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member in his previous question suggested that there was a necessity to provide grain to the agricultural sector in Atlantic Canada because of its importance in supply management. He knows better than I do that one of the benefits of supply managed industries in Canada and one of the reasons that producers and governments support them so fiercely is because they take the cost of their production out of the supply managed system.

Therefore, I suggest to the hon. member, if he speaks to his colleagues in Atlantic Canada, if the supply managed system in Atlantic Canada was not taking a double bite, one out of the supply managed system and the other out of the free trade assistance, there would be adequate support for the feed freight assistance in those non-supply managed areas in Atlantic Canada.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): Smoke and mirrors, smoke and mirrors.

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SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): My question is to the Prime Minister.

West coast shipyard workers are incensed at the unfairness in the awarding of shipbuilding contracts by this federal government, which denied the promised *Polar 8* to B.C., closed down our largest shipyard and laid off hundreds of workers, as the Prime Minister knows.

Meanwhile, Quebec shipyards receive billion dollar contracts and the maritimes have contracts worth millions.

What does the government intend to do to restore the B.C. shipbuilding industry and treat B.C. equitably? We also are part of Canada.

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, if she has been following the rationalization of shipbuilding in this country, will realize that there has been rationalization on the Great Lakes, there has been a great deal of rationalization in shipbuilding capacity on the St. Lawrence, there has been some in western Canada, and we are looking forward at some time to be able to introduce it in the maritimes.

On the contracts which have been given, I should point out to the hon. member, that the contract which was won in the Halifax-Dartmouth industry was won clearly by that, and the bid that was put in by the west coast industry in 1988 was not successful in that bidding process. They failed.

• (1440)

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, we in British Columbia know that rationalizations mean shutdowns and unemployment, not revitalization.

Literally hundreds of skilled maritime workers who are very senior workers have been on welfare for almost up to two years. This is because of the government's delay in providing appropriate compensation which was promised.

What is the government's work adjustment plan and when will these older workers receive their promised compensation?

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions going on with the province of British Columbia and with the various maritime outfits out there in putting together a proper plan. We are looking forward to receiving that finally. It should be coming forth within the next couple of weeks.

I should point out that in that last major shipbuilding contract that went to Halifax Dartmouth Industries and Fenco the largest part, the most intelligent part, the part with all the brains and new high technology, all went to British Columbia, to MacDonald Dettwiler. Fifty million dollars of that went to MacDonald Dettwiler.