

Oral Questions

I want to say to the Minister for International Trade that there are many elements to the trade deal that I think will make the global economy more fair and serve better the people of all countries. Last December I asked the Minister for International Trade if he would consider in a trade deal looking at working conditions for workers, health and safety standards and environment, and the minister said it was a silly idea.

I say to the minister again, if he is truly interested in international agreements that serve the workers and all citizens, will he insist that in every international trade agreement working conditions for workers, health and safety standards, and environmental conditions are part of those trade deals?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the hon. lady might I say that exports, for example, in agricultural products to the United States from Canada went up 20 per cent in 1990 as compared to 1989.

Farmers are not the corporate spooks that the hon. lady refers to. In 1989 agricultural product exports to the U.S. went up 13 per cent compared to 1988.

I hold in my hand here, from Mexico, a document which the hon. lady can have: "Mexico Towards a Better Environment", which is printed on recycled paper containing up to 40 per cent straw cellulose which shows what the Mexicans are doing with respect to trying to combat environmental and pollution problems.

The environment is the concern of us all. The more prosperous Mexico becomes, the greater its ability to combat pollution, the more assets it will have in order to increase salaries and improve the working conditions for people in Mexico.

Why is the hon. lady against giving Mexicans a chance to improve?

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, this party stands for making working conditions for all workers, domestically and internationally, safe and environmentally sound.

The Minister for International Trade talks about making the lives of people better.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the government says that a North American trade agreement would help Mexico's poor. This

statement is hard to believe, because the gap between rich and poor in the United States and Canada is wider than it was before Canada-U.S. free trade.

My question for the minister is this: Where is the evidence that the situation would be different for the poor, for the working people of Mexico and Canada with an agreement between the three countries?

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the proof is that in the world since 1945 and the adoption of liberalized trade policies by most countries of the world, including the United States, trade has expanded exponentially.

As a result of that, we have all become tremendously more prosperous, including Canada. Thirty per cent of our GNP comes from trade. Mexico is also becoming a trading country. It has reduced and changed its whole mercantilist regime.

Until four years ago, Mexico followed the same kind of blind, hopeless policies that the hon. lady advocates. It has changed them. It is now full of dynamism and hope. It is joining the world community. It knows it can only gain wealth and strength by being competitive with the world.

Mexico is turning its back on the old socialist, mercantilist policies. That is what we have done, and we are not going back in the direction that the hon. lady wants us to go back to.

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REFUGEES

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

I think the minister, we on this side and all Canadians are shocked and horrified by the tragedy of the Kurds five years after the international community stood by and watched them being gassed by the same group of the Saddam regime.

Under the so-called new world order, should it not be a case where the international community takes direct action when, clearly, conventions on genocide are being abused? Why are we talking about normalizing relations with Iraq under the UN cease-fire resolution when the tragedy that occurred has not been addressed?