

Oral Questions

[Translation]

TRADE

EXPORTS TO UNITED STATES SUGAR-CONTAINING FOODS

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Since my question deals with something that he did not inherit from the Liberal Party, but that was brought up in a presidential proclamation dated January 29, 1985 which is at this moment limiting the export to the United States of food products containing sugar, and since at this moment entry into the United States of Canadian food products containing sugar is blocked by a unilateral proclamation made by the President of the United States on January 29, 1985, after he came to power, does the Prime Minister intend to raise that question with President Reagan to prevent the closing down of plants and the loss of thousands of jobs as a result of that unilateral decision?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we are actually going to try and deal with important questions such as this one by hopefully issuing a joint declaration of principle indicating that we mutually favour freer, more acceptable access to our own common markets because, as I mentioned earlier in answer to my friend the Leader of the Opposition, there are millions of jobs that directly depend on our being able to maintain productive relations with the Americans. It is in that direction, with that goal in mind that I will be undertaking those negotiations over the weekend.

Mr. Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, workers in the food industry will have no use for any Prime Minister's declaration of principles. I am asking for something more than vague statements. I am asking him whether, between two sittings in front of the cameras, he will have time to solve the problem of sugar-containing foods that are turned back at the American border.

Mr. Mulroney: How mean can you be; yes, how mean! Liberal frustration permeates even your legitimate questions. I admit you have a legitimate question, but why all those disparaging comments against our historical allies? We in the Progressive Conservative Government are on the side of the 75 per cent of Quebecers who today said in a poll that they favour productive relations with the United States. And this we are going to achieve, not by voicing disparaging comments against our allies. We are here to build strong relations with our allies, especially the Americans.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of the Environment introduced a program in Canada, the first comprehensive program of substance, to deal with the question of acid rain, I noted that there were many favourable comments from the other side of the House, coming from the NDP, in regard to what she had accomplished and the manner in which the provinces and the private sector were brought into the process. I think it was generally agreed. For example, the Chairman of the Coalition Against Acid Rain in Canada, the leading environmental group, said that it was a very noteworthy accomplishment, a very great first step by Canada which had never been taken before. It is in this spirit that we deal with what I referred to as the savagery of acid rain to our environment.

We are trying to clean up our own act. We are trying to assume our responsibilities. We are trying to persuade, as well, our neighbours that it is a common problem. It must be dealt with internationally. I do not expect, in an imperfect world, miracles overnight, but I hope we will be able to achieve solid progress of which my hon. friend, and I, and others, will be proud.

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH UNITED STATES PRESIDENT

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. I think everyone is aware that the previous agreement struck between Canada and the United States on acid rain simply did not work because Americans did not have the willingness and political will to make it work. Again, will the Prime Minister assure the House that he will press the President of the United States to enter into an agreement which goes much farther than just simply saying "we'd like to discuss it"? It has been discussed to death; what we need now is action.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. friend that indeed we have inherited a particularly sad situation of non-accomplishment by our predecessors in the area of acid rain. I don't think even an objective Liberal would try to suggest that the previous Minister accomplished anything except getting himself squeezed in the back, by the Cabinet door. There was nothing accomplished at all, and we had to start from zilch. It is a complicated, difficult file, which has been marred by bad faith and hostility in the past. We have tried to create an atmosphere within which we can move it ahead in a substantial way. This is what I am hoping to accomplish. This is what I think Canadians would view as a significant improvement, not a miracle, which will lead to the kinds of definitive steps that will rid Canada and the United States of this tremendous problem for our environment.