

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the member asked me that question. She knows very well that what she said was said by somebody else. I never used those words. I always said that the health of women was paramount in terms of how we should deal with that.

I totally agree that there are women who need implants. They need all information available to make their own decision which we must all respect.

In that respect she knows that even if there were requests by the Plastic Surgeons Association in Quebec I did not put out the moratorium. I do not intend to do that as long as the committee agrees.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER INDUSTRY

Mrs. Diane Marleau (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, today, at the request of this government, GATT is looking into the softwood dispute between Canada and the U.S.

Our softwood industry cannot afford a long, drawn-out process. Does the Minister for International Trade feel that we can get an early resolution through GATT? When does he expect a decision?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, there are two processes under way. There is one process, the countervailing duty process, which is under way in the United States. Following that process there could well be the dispute settlement mechanism, the binding decision by a panel on the process in the United States.

The second process is the GATT process to which my hon. friend has referred. We may well see some decisions on the GATT process some time this summer.

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade and it concerns the softwood lumber industry.

The government has recently told us on many occasions about the virtues of the bi-national dispute settlement mechanism in the free trade agreement the minister just mentioned. By the time we get a resolution with this process it can take up to two years. In the

meantime the damage would have been done to many of our mills, particularly our smaller mills.

If the government believes that our softwood industry is not being subsidized, what programs and options is it considering? Will it provide interim relief to this industry while the dispute works its way through the process?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is referring to some of the same elements as the previous questioner did.

It is quite right. We have taken action against the United States on the softwood issue, on three different elements of the decision or the action it took. As I indicated, we should see the first indications of those decisions some time this summer; not the two years my hon. friend has referred to.

Let us see what happens with the process as it unfolds. As the member from Winnipeg drew to the attention of the House a week or so ago, certain options are available to us. I think it is important that we complete this process in the strongest possible way and try to win the decisions as quickly as possible.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister answering for agriculture today.

Late last month it was announced that farmers would immediately be able to truck their grain to the United States without off-loading at country elevators and without the regular charges.

This came as a shock to the grain companies. Clearly it was done without consultation. Clearly it was a political directive and clearly it undermined the independence of the Canadian Wheat Board.

What possible explanation does the minister have? Is it one more step toward dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of my colleague, the Minister of State for Grains, I will take note of the question and make inquiries on it.