

Oral Questions

interim payments to be made. The Prime Minister said this morning that we will be making that announcement at the beginning of the week and I am sure the Hon. Member will be very pleased with that announcement. It will provide considerable support to do exactly what hesays—allow producers to put their crops in the ground, in the spring, as they usually do.

POSITION OF UNITED STATES AND EUROPEAN GRAIN PRODUCERS

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Those payments are for last year's deficiencies. Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. Will the Government not give the Canadian grain producers the same kind of protection and support that is given to the U.S. grain producers and European grain producers?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, sure, the money is there as a result of what we believe will be the final amount of the Western Grain Stabilization Act payment for the present crop year. However, the point is that it will come at the very time they need it the most—prior to spring seeding.

The Hon. Member is a farmer. In fact there are only a couple of farmers in both opposition Parties and he is one of them. He will know that the timing of the receipt of money as far as many people are concerned, especially farmers, is almost as important as the amount. That timing will be there. In all likelihood, if these markets continue, there will be another stabilization payment for the coming year as a result of the Act. So the money will be there at the beginning of this planting season.

• (1130)

Interest rates in the meantime have gone down. That is an assist as far as farmers going to their banks to get money to put their crops in the ground are concerned. I think the Hon. Member should give the Government credit for the way it has been able to manage its fiscal affairs so that those interest rates have come down as much as they have.

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TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister aware that the Canadian Press has just reported that Senator Robert Packwood, chairman of the U.S. Senate committee studying President Reagan's request for authority to negotiate a free trade agreement with Canada, has just said that his committee is likely to turn down the President's request, to vote against it? Is the Prime Minister aware of this and, if so, what is he going to do about this startling development?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Well, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of it. I was just made aware after the press conference that Senator Packwood, an Oregon Republican, has offered his prediction of what might take place with regard to a committee of the United States Senate. I suppose there are two answers. First, this should establish very clearly for some Hon. Members of the House of Commons, who appear to have felt that the United States was somehow just down there on bended knee waiting for the Canadians to come in and negotiate an arrangement, that, if we can negotiate one, it will be very much in Canada's interest to try to do so.

Ms. Copps: You were on your knees.

Mr. Mulroney: Second, I have never minimized the difficulties involved in this kind of complex process. I heard what Senator Packwood said, but I remind my hon. friend that we deal with the administration as a whole, including the Congress, and not just Senator Packwood.

CANADIAN POSITION

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Will the Prime Minister assure the House that he and his Government will not now move to make concessions to the United States on matters like exports of lumber or Canadian patent law in order to try to ensure a favourable vote in that Senate committee?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I suppose, Mr. Speaker, of all the silly things the Hon. Member for Windsor West has said, this one takes the cake.

What we have been doing is protecting Canada's interests with a vigilance which this country has not seen in some years, and we will continue to do precisely that, including trying to negotiate a bilateral trade enhanced agreement with the United States which will bring more jobs and more prosperity into Canada. I think that Senator Packwood's apprehensions indicate the extent to which this Government is on the right track in trying to do precisely that.

FREE TRADE TALKS—REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT WITHDRAWAL

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I have the same question to direct with extreme seriousness to the Prime Minister because this chairman is clearly reflecting his committee. It is not just a chance announcement by one man in the Senate. In view of this, will the Government now withdraw the request for freer trade talks—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Langdon:—and instead work out a more modest trade package following recommendations of the special parliamentary committee for the establishment of an IJC-like trade mediation committee and a tougher, more flexible—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Langdon:—Canadian import tribunal?