

Oral Questions

I want to ask the minister: Why it is, when his Prime Minister on two separate occasions intervened directly to his good friend, the President of the United States, that it is the Americans now who are trying to torpedo our marketing boards at the GATT? Why?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): The Americans are in favour of tariffication. We know that and they have said so publicly. Our position is consistent and there are other countries that are supporting us in this. The Japanese, for instance, are supporting us and many of the European countries are supporting us in maintaining article XI.

Our position, to say it again, has not changed. We have allies in this position. We have no intention of changing it. We are making our case as strongly as we possibly can, and I believe that at the end of the day, whatever GATT solution is found to the problems in agriculture, it will include a measure that will protect Canadian marketing boards.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds. It is on the same issue as that of my colleague.

The reason the uncertainty is there is because farmers want to know where they stand and where they are going to stand. The Prime Minister has assured Canadians time and time again that through personal and written contact he has softened the determination of the President of the United States to destroy Canadian marketing boards at GATT.

Today United States negotiators have told us that a deal has been cut between the European Community and the United States. It is not signed but it is cut.

Can the minister guarantee to the 40,000 Canadian dairy, egg and poultry producers that this deal includes a strengthened and clarified article XI?

• (1440)

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member, everybody in the House and all the people who are connected with supply management across the country that no deal has been cut. We have absolutely no

intention of signing a deal if it does not benefit Canadian industry.

I can assure the member that no deal has been cut. He should also know that until everything is agreed to, we will not sign any kind of an arrangement. It is a package deal and no deal has been made. Therefore there has been no deal cut on marketing boards, export subsidies or anything else.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same minister.

After weakening our position on supply management of our farm products during the free trade talks, the government gave farmers the assurance that GATT article XI would be reinforced.

Considering the minister's answers here in the House, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask him this: Do you think farmers will believe your story after you abandoned them during the free trade talks and now we can expect a devastating decision at GATT?

[*English*]

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, with respect, the member is dead wrong when he talks about the free trade agreement. Marketing boards are fully protected in the free trade agreement.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mayer: They laugh, but they should also know—

An hon. member: You had better read the agreement.

Mr. Mayer: Somebody says that I should read the agreement. We read the agreement and, as a result of reading the agreement, we established another marketing board for broiler chicken hatching eggs after we signed the free trade agreement. If you want to talk about the free trade agreement with the Americans it is fully protected in our dealings with the United States, Canadian Marketing Boards.

To get back to the other question about strengthening and clarifying article XI, we established that position with producers in the country that depend on article XI. That is our negotiating position and it will remain there unless the people connected with that part of the industry tell us to change it. To date they have not and our position remains the same.