

Oral Questions

closings this month: Cobi Foods, St. Lawrence Starch and Gerber Baby Foods. Five hundred more jobs are lost. Twenty-two processing plants have closed across the country this last year with 3,071 jobs lost, and that in addition to what is being lost in the fish processing industry.

Given the disastrous effects of the free trade agreement on agriculture in Canada and on the food processing industry, will the minister call upon his government to invoke the six month cancellation clause of the free trade agreement, or will he just continue to bluster and evade the issue that Canada's food production and processing industry is in serious trouble?

Mr. Mazankowski: Well, Mr. Speaker, every sparrow that falls will be blamed upon the free trade agreement.

An hon. Member: What a turkey.

Mr. Mazankowski: When it comes to turkeys, the hon. member knows who they are because they are all surrounding him, and as Christmas grows near they get fatter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the minister could conclude his answer.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I find it rather ironic that the questioner who preceded the member for Lambton—Middlesex sort of suggested that we were too generous to the agricultural community and this gentleman now is indicating that we are not generous enough.

He knows as well as anyone else in this House should know that the price of grain is established in the international market-place and Canadian grain is largely exported and it must be competitive to meet competition. The Hon. Member should know that.

He talks about the processing industry. As I have said in the House before, the processing industry has had a very good year. Investments are up by some 15 per cent. Investment is up by 40 per cent in the bakery industry, 21 per cent in biscuit manufacturing and 73 per cent in meat processing.

He wants to talk about what is happening because of free trade. Pilsbury, Canada Packers, General Foods, J.M. Schneider, M.L.M. Flour Products and C.S.T. are all expanding because of free trade.

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CLOSURE OF CFB SUMMERSIDE

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, it has been eight long months since this government asked for the closure of CFB Summerside. Since that time the economy of Prince County and indeed the economy of Prince Edward Island has suffered severely, as the Minister of Finance has already indicated.

My question is directed to the Prime Minister. Now that the Prime Minister and his cabinet have had eight months to respond to their commitment of a significant federal presence to replace CFB Summerside, is he prepared to make that announcement today following his meeting with Premier Joe Ghiz?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Just say yes.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals ask a question and yet they refuse to let anybody answer. That is the problem with the Liberals.

I will be meeting with Premier Ghiz this afternoon and any matters that have to be announced will be announced then or at an appropriate time in the future.

Mr. McGuire: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Associate Minister of National Defence. In view of the fact that the Atlantic fisheries is in a state of crisis and the fact that the elimination of the 880 Squadron will only make that crisis worse as 50 per cent of our air surveillance will be eliminated with the elimination of the tracker squadron, will the minister offer some support to her beleaguered colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, and order a full reinstatement of the 880 Tracker Squadron or at least a partial reprieve because service to the Atlantic fishery is needed now more than ever? Will the minister do her part toward solving this crisis?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the hon. member