

[Text]

REVIEW OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

Question No. 153—**Mr. Althouse:**

1. Are any agricultural programs being reviewed to determine their acceptability under the criteria agreed to by Canada at the Cairns Group meeting held in Ottawa, May, 1987, and the OECD summit held in Venice, June, 1987 and, if so, which programs?

2. Do the programs continue to meet the criteria as agreed to at the two meetings and, if not (a) which ones do not (b) what program changes could be made to make the programs fit the new requirements?

3. During the last fiscal year, was financial assistance provided under the programs which no longer meet the criteria agreed to and, if so, in what amount?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): 1. No review of agricultural programs to determine their conformity with the internationally agreed guidelines is being undertaken at the present time. However, the OECD has developed a unit of measure, the Producer Subsidy Equivalent, for comparing amongst countries, the amount of support provided to specific agriculture commodities. Agriculture Canada officials are reviewing the PSE calculations as currently applied by the OECD to Canadian programs.

The initiatives of the Cairns Group and the principles agreed to by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are aimed at making agricultural production more responsive to market forces. These guidelines will have to be taken into account by countries in their domestic policy formulations to the extent they are reflected in the contractual undertakings in the Uruguay Round of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN).

At this stage, it is too early to predict the outcome of these negotiations. Canada and other participating countries have tabled proposals on how to proceed with the negotiations. Only when the scope and content of the MTN become clearer will it be possible to ascertain the full implications for change to existing Canadian policies and programs.

2. Not applicable.

3. Not applicable.

[Translation]

Mr. Grisé: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Speaker: The question enumerated by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary has been answered. Shall the remaining questions stand.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Privilege—Mr. Angus

[English]

PRIVILEGE

PRIVACY OF MEMBERS' OFFICES—ALLEGED BREACH—MR. SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: On January 28, 1988, the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan (Mr. Angus) claimed that the rights of three Members of Parliament had been breached in relation to the privacy of their physical offices. He contended that House of Commons staff had removed software from computers in Members' offices without informing either the Members concerned or their staff what they were doing. I undertook to look into the specific circumstances of this issue and report back to the House. I am now ready to do so.

[Translation]

There is a pilot project underway at the present time in relation to the installation of personal computers in the offices of Members of the House. There are some 29 participants involved in this pilot project at the present time.

[English]

In an effort to proceed as expeditiously as possible with the pilot, interim software was installed in various personal computers in order for the evaluation phase of the project to proceed on schedule. This interim software was intended to be utilized only until the customized software was available.

On December 2, 1987 sufficient copies of the customized software were available for installation and evaluation in nine of the twenty-nine pilot machines, and the substitutions were made. The balance of the pilot project participants were provided with copies of the final version of the software on January 27, 1988.

It would appear that the intention of staff in the OASIS group was simply to ensure that Members' offices were equipped with the most up-to-date software and, in the case of pilot project participants, that they be provided with the same software that will shortly be provided to all Members' offices.

Clearly, however, the extent to which OASIS staff apprised Members' staff of what they were doing was insufficient. In that context, the complaint raised by the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan is not without foundation. More important, he underscores an issue that pertains to policies and procedures for servicing and maintaining Members' personal computers so as to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of data stored and manipulated on these machines.

I am satisfied that what has occurred in this case was done innocently. However, the point made by the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan that electronic information should be treated no differently from "hard copy" material is well taken. All staff involved in providing electronic equipment or electronic data processing services to Members have been cautioned on the importance, in future, of fully briefing Members' staff and obtaining their prior authorization before