

Oral Questions

● (1140)

[English]

METRIC CONVERSION

EFFECT ON AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of State for Small Business. It relates to the metric changeover issue in the agricultural sector and particularly the mandatory aspects relating to cattle producers, who are deeply concerned about the impact of this metric policy as it affects our beef and live cattle trade with the United States.

In view of the fact that all such export cattle trade begins at our country auction markets, and that those are sales on a weight basis, will the minister give serious consideration to allowing the cattle sector to remain on a voluntary basis with respect to the metric conversion policy?

Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of State, Small Businesses): Madam Speaker, as far as I know, the cattle sector of the agricultural community is still on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Hargrave: Madam Speaker, that of course applies to most of the sectors which have not changed yet. I am sure the minister is aware of that. Would the minister responsible for metric conversion support an approach to the United States which would establish an agreement or treaty which would allow for metric conversion only when both countries agree to proceed together?

[Translation]

Mr. Lapointe (Charlevoix): Madam Speaker, I feel that the hon. member's suggestion is excellent. It is essential that our effort to convert to the metric system be as much as possible in line with what is being done in the United States.

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[English]

ENERGY

USE OF DOGS TO DETECT OIL AND GAS LEAKS

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources my question is directed to the Prime Minister. I am going to say a few words and then excuse myself from asking a supplementary question.

Madam Speaker: That just will not do. The idea is to ask brief questions at all times.

Mr. Taylor: We have some 200,000 miles of pipelines and we are losing a lot of gas and oil through leaks. Dogs from the Avery Kennels in Alberta were able to detect ten leaks in 30 miles of gas line after a helicopter and electronic flamepacks failed to find these leaks. I think there is a tremendous chance for conservation of gas and oil.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I sense that the hon. member is just about to ask his question. I think he should do so.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, I am Madam Speaker. There is a tremendous chance for the conservation of gas and oil through the use of dogs. Will the government consider giving some help to the development of the adequacy of dogs to detect gas and oil leaks?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, now that I have the assurance that there will not be a supplementary, I would say that is a "doggone" good question.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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FISHERIES

PROTECTION OF FISH HABITAT

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. It relates to Tuesday's Supreme Court decision which ruled that parts of the Fisheries Act regarding the protection of fish habitat were ultra vires, a decision based on infringement of provincial rights.

In light of the threat which now exists to fish habitat in estuarine areas of British Columbia which are under federal jurisdiction, I ask the minister what plans he has to protect fish habitat in estuaries.

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, as I indicated to the previous questioner on this issue, the change in the legislation was brought about some three years ago. It was felt that it strengthened the Fisheries Act and that it added more clout to it. But I have to tell the hon. member that even with that section being taken away, the Fisheries Act still remains a very powerful piece of legislation to protect fish. It was really the other provisions which were used by my predecessors to effect some rather important decisions. There are other sections which are open to us.

We are now waiting to see if the section being redrafted could, in fact, be reintroduced in this House. I am getting legal advice from my colleague and from the legal people in my own department. But I assure the hon. member, and, through him, the fishermen of this country, that the habitat of fish is not totally threatened. Perhaps the protection is a little weaker than the protection we had, but we will use the other provisions and await the judgment of the courts on those items which can be used.