

Oral Questions
AGRICULTURE

PRICE OF HERBICIDES—STEPS TO ASSIST FARMERS

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Agriculture. In view of the fact that certain herbicides are priced much lower in the United States than in Canada, even if one takes into account the discounting of the Canadian dollar against the U.S. dollar, in view of the fact that the Canadian farmer must compete in the international market and get international prices as the return for his products; and in view of the overwhelming evidence that the price of certain herbicides is much higher, will he reconsider his position, opening the border to allow Canadian farmers to purchase herbicides in the U.S. if that is the best deal they can get?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes it all sound very simple. I do not agree with everything he said. Many herbicides in Canada are cheaper than they are in the United States. No American farmer has ever been allowed to come into Canada and purchase herbicides to take back into the United States for his own use. It is against the law in their country to do that because the registration in respect of quality may not be the same here as in the United States.

The same thing is true in reverse. We have adopted the same law here because some products do not meet out registration demands and qualifications. There are many herbicides, as I said, which are much cheaper in Canada than in the United States. In addition, the United States has a 14 per cent tariff in respect of chemicals going into that country even if they are manufactured here in Canada where there is no tariff on their coming into Canada if brought in legitimately.

Mr. Epp: Mr. Speaker, there are tariffs, but even with those and the discounted Canadian dollar certain products are priced much lower in the United States, and Canadian farmers can only obtain an income from selling on international markets. In view of the overwhelming evidence possessed by farm groups, individual farmers and members of parliament, if the evidence is given to the minister once again will he consider changing the policy relating to herbicides in respect of which Canadian farmers are now being penalized severely?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, Canadian farmers are not being penalized. I am the Minister of Agriculture for all of Canada—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whelan:—and I have to consider the picture as a whole scene in respect of herbicides. I can go into the maritimes, for example, and find that with regard to potato herbicides the price is lower there than it is in Maine. I can go into Alberta and find that herbicides there are cheaper than they are in Montana. Neither the people from Montana nor from Maine can import those herbicides because it is against the law, in addition to which there is a tariff. However, there is no tariff

[Mr. Blais.]

on herbicides coming into Canada, as the hon. member has indicated.

SPECIAL IMPORT PERMITS FOR AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture along the same lines. Since the Canada-United States border will not be opened to the free flow of chemicals, which some of us on this side of the House have advocated, let me refer to committee proceedings dated Tuesday, March 21, where the minister, in reply to a question I asked, stated:

We are considering doing some other things that I am not free to make public at this time—suggestions by some farm organizations on how we import chemicals.

Has the minister given any consideration to allowing specific or special import permits for agricultural chemicals which are in some cases between 60 per cent and 100 per cent cheaper in the United States than in Canada? Would the minister give consideration to this request?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am perfectly willing to look at any evidence the hon. member may have. I have an advisory group that is appointed from the industry, farm organizations, which reviews prices in the United States and in Canada. I am sure that the hon. member realizes if we had fixed prices the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs would be after me in relation to a combine, particularly if we allowed that kind of situation to exist. There is competition in respect of these chemicals among distributors in Canada.

If the hon. member has real evidence, I will consider it. But no evidence has been presented to me by anyone, which I am aware of at the present time, that indicates a 100 per cent discrepancy. If the hon. member can come forward with that kind of fact, I certainly will consider some different action to what we have taken in the past.

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TRADE

EFFECT OF GATT NEGOTIATIONS ON TEXTILES

Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I want to address a question to the Deputy Prime Minister: it relates to questions asked last week regarding textiles and GATT. In view of the fact that the United States protects and maintains 90 per cent of the U.S. textile market for U.S. textile producers, and that similarly the European Economic Community protects and maintains 85 per cent of that textile market for its own domestic producers, what percentage of the Canadian textile market will be maintained for the domestic textile industry in Canada after the cuts which the minister referred to last week are made at GATT?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I think I can repeat with even greater certainty what I said last week, that there is