

Oral Questions

● (1120)

[Translation]

THE LATE HONOURABLE JEAN MARCHAND

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to add my modest contribution to what has been said by religious, political and union figures who in the past few days were unanimous in their tribute to that great Canadian, Jean Marchand. He was one of that rare breed of men who not only make things happen but also significantly change the course of a country's history.

Through his commitment to social change, he gave dignity to Quebec workers and opened the way for a vigorous labour movement in the Province of Quebec.

Through his political involvement, he encouraged French Canadians to take, to an unprecedented extent, their rightful place in Canada's political apparatus. He always championed the cause of social justice, he was humble and generous in the exercise of authority, and he was a true friend to the neediest and most vulnerable in our society.

To his daughter, Marie-Ève, to his grandchildren, his brothers and sisters, his nephew Jean Sexton, who reminds me so much of him, and to all members of his family, I wish to extend my condolences and the assurance that his memory will always fill me with gratitude and admiration.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: I think it is appropriate to remark that, unfortunately, the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) was unable to be here several days ago when tributes were paid to the Honourable Jean Marchand. In view of the special friendship of the Hon. Member, and keeping in mind that many of us attended a memorial service this morning, I thought it was appropriate that another tribute be paid.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

TRADE**CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT—REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Yesterday, when the Conservative majority in the House of Commons was passing the Canada-U.S. free trade implementing legislation, we learned at the same time that once again the Canadian people have been seriously misled about the impact of that deal.

We have been given assurances repeatedly by the Prime Minister and other Ministers that there was nothing in the deal that would affect the ability to deliver regional development programs, a very vital part of Canada.

Mr. McDermid: Right.

Mr. Axworthy: At the very same time, the Deputy Minister for Western Diversification, Mr. Bruce Rawson, said explicitly that the Canada-U.S. trade deal was going to be used as a basis for effecting decisions on regional development.

Mr. McDermid: He did not. Read what he said.

Mr. Axworthy: I quote directly from the recorded transcript of Mr. Rawson's remarks: "It is most important to avoid, we think, competitive sectors such as red meat that we think are much more likely to cause frictions in a free trade environment".

Clearly, Mr. Rawson has pointed out that the Government is already taking decisions relating to regional development in western Canada based upon the trade deal and what it thinks it will mean and how the Americans will implement it.

Why is the Government continuing to withhold vital information from the Canadian people? Why are western Canadians being penalized already by the Government before the agreement is even in effect?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Hon. Member has toned his rhetoric from his communiqué, but I am displeased that he has not been able to recognize reality, fact, and truth.

The Hon. Member is talking about an article which inaccurately reflects the statements made by Mr. Rawson. I want to inform the Hon. Member of what Mr. Rawson said, and what I have said consistently. We do not give grants or loans to companies in competitive sectors. I have said so, and Mr. Rawson has said so publicly.

That has been the stand publicly. These statements have been published in our material which I am sure the Hon. Member will read, if he has time.

I said exactly the same thing to the Hon. Member in the legislative committee as Mr. Rawson. Mr. Waddell from External Affairs, the U.S.-Canada Trade Desk, said the same thing to the Hon. Member during legislative hearings. The senior ADM for Western Diversification, Mr. Silverman, under questioning by the Hon. Member said the very same thing to him.

Canada and the provinces are as free to assist and promote regional development under free trade as they were before. The free trade agreement brings us under no other obligations regarding subsidies than we already have under GATT. I hope the Hon. Member takes the opportunity to read the free trade agreement.

Mr. Axworthy: I say in response to the Minister that his statement just confirms the Government's continual intention to mislead the Canadian people.