

Oral Questions

Such reasonable considerations will serve to reduce the increasing tensions arising between our two nations.

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HUMAN RIGHTS**EL SALVADOR—A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS**

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Madam Speaker, on March 24, today, I would like to pay tribute to Archbishop Oscar Romero who died three years ago, a victim of an assassination.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ogle: I will speak to the question of justice that he died for. Archbishop Oscar Romero stood for the poor, the poor who have been calling out—

Madam Speaker: Order. Unless the Hon. Member discusses an issue, I cannot allow him to continue. He must discuss an issue in these statements before the House.

Mr. Ogle: I speak simply to the question of justice. In El Salvador, most of the people are poor. Most of the people do not have a voice. Once in a while in the history of mankind a person comes along whose voice begins to speak for the voiceless. Today I would like to join my voice with those who have gone before us speaking for those who do not have the power to speak for themselves.

Powerful nations, powerful Governments, and powerful armies sometimes come to a country and say they are speaking for the people. This is false. In tribute in this last minute, I would simply like to say that the person we are remembering today, said moments before he died—

Madam Speaker: Order.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AGRICULTURE**POTATO EXPORTS—INVESTIGATION BY UNITED STATES
COMMERCE DEPARTMENT**

Mr. Mel Gass (Malpeque): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. According to a decision made by the U.S. Trade Commission on March 22, allegations made by the State of Maine Potato Council that Canadian potatoes are being sold on U.S. markets at prices lower than in Canada, thereby damaging the potato industry in Maine, are to be further investigated by the U.S. Department of Commerce. American potato growers have asked that penalizing duties be imposed against potato imports from Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. Is the Minister

aware of this situation, and what does he plan to do to protect potato growers in P.E.I. and New Brunswick from this type of harassment and uncertainty?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member knows the procedure that is followed in the United States of America. They followed that procedure by a split vote in their commission that investigated the charges that their producers made. They decided to go ahead with the inquiry. The study and inquiry will take place. If I understand correctly, it has to be completed by August 1. We have received representations from the potato producers through their official organ, the Canadian Horticultural Council. They have asked us to assist with regard to fees for solicitors, et cetera, which are estimated to cost \$100,000. We are very much concerned about it. We feel it is a form of harassment and that is the procedure they will follow. I understand that hearings will be held in Charlotte-town, Fredericton, and probably one other location during the coming weeks and months.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

Mr. Mel Gass (Malpeque): Madam Speaker, the estimated value of the potato industry to P.E.I. and New Brunswick is \$32 million. It is critical to the economy of both those Provinces. The farmers of P.E.I. and New Brunswick can get little assurance and relaxation from what the Minister has just said. I again ask the Minister what immediate steps he plans to take to create some certainty in the potato industry in P.E.I. and New Brunswick.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member knows that meetings have been held in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the other eastern potato-producing provinces, Ontario and Quebec. Other meetings will take place next week. They have been talking about forming a better marketing system for potatoes for the past several years. They put forward seven papers on what kind of plan they want for marketing. If they had that plan at this time, they would not have to worry very much about what the United States or anybody else is doing.

IMPORTATION OF UNITED STATES POTATOES

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Madam Speaker, I do not believe that the establishment of the organization proposed by the Minister will in fact change the world market price of potatoes, which he is suggesting it will do. Inasmuch as the basis of the decision is the fact that the State of Maine has stated that we have damaged their potato industry, can the Minister now tell this House what parts of the Canadian potato industry are being damaged by imports from the United States? Is he in the mood to take any comparable action against the movement of potatoes northward?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is talking about the potato indus-