

Oral Questions

Minister confirm that the \$183 million of assistance that is presently given by the federal Government in the policy of contracting out science and technology is one of those measures now subject to negotiation? Will he not agree that that particular measure, if negotiated away, would put in jeopardy the entire Canadian high-tech industry we are trying to promote and support?

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the Liberals say on the one hand that we must lay all our cards on the table while on the other hand their Leader says we have shown too many cards in the negotiations. Discussions and negotiations are continuing. I can assure the Hon. Member that the Government will protect that very valuable industry in these negotiations.

Mr. Axworthy: The Hon. Member has it wrong. We did not say that too many cards were shown; we said too many cards had been given away.

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister or the spokesperson for the Government. In the measures set out by the Minister, we now know that the Government has cut back the export development assistance from \$313 million last year to \$26 million this year. At the same time, the Secretary of the Treasury in the United States has just asked Congress for an additional \$200 million of export assistance. How can we have a proper negotiation on trade when we are cutting back our export assistance to Canadian industry while the Americans are adding to theirs?

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the Hon. Member thinks the United States trades with Canada and no one else in the world, and that everything should stop when these negotiations are taking place. There is nothing further from the truth. The United States trades with the world, as does Canada. This goes on while these negotiations continue. To relate one to the other is foolishness.

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AGRICULTURE

REQUEST FOR GUARANTEED RETURN FOR GRAIN PRODUCERS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. He will know that two weeks ago I asked him about the Government's decision on the initial price for our grain producers. The Government had not reached a decision. The Minister also knows that the initial price our grain producers received last year was down some 19 per cent and that disaster ought not be repeated this year. Will the Minister give a guarantee to our

grain producers that their final price will certainly not be lower than what they received last year?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member will recognize the procedure that must be followed. The information will have to be considered very carefully by Cabinet. That is exactly what we are doing at the moment. It would be very inappropriate for me to comment at this time, for a whole variety of reasons, many of which I will raise later today in the course of debate on the motion put forward by the Official Opposition.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I understand the concerns with respect to some of the details and that there may be a reason for the delay in the Minister's announcement. However, I, and more relevantly, the grain producers, would like to hear the Minister say today that whatever the Government's final decision, the final return to the grain producers who already had a 20 per cent drop last year will not be lower than it was last year? Will the Minister at least give that guarantee?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, it might be helpful if I respond to the Hon. Member's question by reading a statement that was released on March 5 by 55 farm leaders and some 35 farm organizations. This is exactly the message they are saying:

Farm leaders today agree that producers should base spring planting decisions on market signals. Farmers should not make assumptions about government assistance in planting their 1987 production. It is too soon to come to any conclusions about the help that will be needed or how it would be given but we will insist—

That is the farm leadership:

—that any new assistance measures be production and market neutral.

I ask the Member to consider that statement on behalf of the farm leadership in this country.

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister is saying that the market will ultimately be what dictates the Government's final answer, he is telling our grain producers that they can expect a major drop in what they will get this year compared to what they received last year. The Minister did not answer my first question. Will he answer my second question? Will he guarantee to our grain producers that their final return, which was already disastrously low last year, will not go below last year's level? That is what they want to hear.

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with the question. Surely, however, if the Hon. Member does not recognize it, I am certain members of his caucus should recognize that it is very premature, very untimely and very improper in the interests of Canadian agriculture to answer that question in the House at this time or