

Oral Questions

idea? What bold action does she have in mind now that the talk has not worked?

• (1450)

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): First of all, Mr. Speaker, it is not fair to say that the talk has not worked. This is a long, arduous and difficult process. It is as frustrating for us as it is for anybody, because we are working very hard in the interests of our Newfoundland fishermen.

In my view the plan proposed by the premier of Newfoundland is not a realistic one, but we are prepared to work with our allies and other interested parties. We certainly agree with the thesis that there must be better control of the navigable waters and of all zones off the coast of Canada.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Canadian farmers fear that this government might abandon its system of protecting poultry, egg and dairy production as a result of the ongoing GATT negotiations. I emphasize that the very future of Canada's dairy and poultry industry essentially hangs in the balance.

My question for the Prime Minister is: What specific measures is the government prepared to take at this time to ensure that Canada's supply management structure remains intact? Can his government give Canada's agricultural community the assurance that tariffication will not be used as a fall back position in the ongoing GATT negotiations?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, as we mentioned many times, Canada has put in place its position on the GATT negotiations after full consultation with farm leaders across the country. Those farm leaders are with the Minister for International Trade and the Minister of Agriculture in Geneva today to work and to look at the situation.

As we know, the tariffication is not acceptable for a supply management system in Canada. We said that in the past and it is still our position.

We are following closely with our negotiators in Geneva. They are going to meet with Mr. Dunkel. We will stand by our position and I think farmers could count on us to maintain our position on that.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, the Americans have been the main protagonists in the push to remove supply management in the current GATT negotiations. They have crippled our wheat industry and now they are after our marketing boards.

Does the minister recognize that once poultry and dairy are removed from commodity controlled protection, it is only a matter of time before those industries are gone? Is the minister prepared to get tough with the Americans and exercise Canada's option to cancel the free trade agreement should our agricultural industries be any further threatened?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I do not really understand. As you know and as the hon. member should know, we have protected totally the supply management system during our negotiations with the United States. We still stand by that.

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LOAN SHARKING

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister but in his capacity as consumer and corporate affairs minister. It concerns a disturbing development in the Toronto area.

Because banks have recently been reluctant to extend consumer credit in the form of personal loans, many people have turned to a new class of loan sharks. These financial entrepreneurs are charging hundreds of dollars up front to make an application for a bank loan. Of course most people find they pay the fee and get nothing.