

Oral Questions

ing, we should first have some indication from my Quebec counterpart that he is really willing to negotiate in good faith on a reasonable basis.

I have already sent a telegram to the Minister, Mr. Léonard, to express the Government of Canada's concern, considering what transpired in negotiations with his officials. The last proposal we made provides that Quebec's jurisdiction would be fully respected, while the Government of Canada would, of course, meet its obligations.

I can only hope that the Government of Quebec will give some indication, some expression of good faith and that it will accept this as a basis for negotiations. However, in view of what seems to be happening right now in the National Assembly, I cannot be optimistic, and in this situation, everything depends on the good faith of the Government of Quebec.

Mr. La Salle: Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary. I am sure that all the Members from Quebec here in the House understand the importance of my question. I am not accusing the Minister of failing to make any proposals to Quebec, and I appreciate the proposal he did make. Nor do I want to make any value judgement on the good or bad faith of the two Governments involved. I merely want to ask the Minister responsible, who is conscious of the importance of reaching some arrangement or agreement with Quebec, to invite the Quebec Government to a meeting within the next ten days, and I am asking this on behalf of 1,600 mayors in Quebec who are anxious to see such an agreement as soon as possible. If Quebec wants to bear the odium of refusing to negotiate, so be it, but I am asking the Minister here in the House to offer to meet with his Quebec counterpart next week in order to settle this issue in a fair and equitable manner.

Mr. Roberts: Madam Speaker, I think the position we have taken on behalf of the Government is firmly supported by the majority of mayors and municipal councils. As I said before, Madam Speaker, I am ready to make all necessary arrangements to achieve positive and concrete results, but, as they say in English—

[*English*]

It takes two to tango.

Mr. La Salle: Are you ready?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roberts: The other side will have to co-operate, because we on our side have shown our good will, and we must have some indication from the other party that it is prepared to commence negotiations on the basis of the principles I have just mentioned.

[*English*]

TRADE

POLAND—RESCHEDULING OF DEBT—CANADIAN POSITION

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade. When receiving the Nobel Peace Prize on Sunday, Lech Walesa said:

My country is in the grips of a major economic crisis. A permanent economic crisis in Poland may also have serious repercussions for Europe. Thus, Poland ought to be helped and deserves help.

Will the Minister tell the House if Canada intends to respond to this appeal? Specifically, will he tell the House if he is prepared to enter into negotiations for the rescheduling of Poland's debts so that Canada may sell some grain to Poland?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of State (International Trade)): Madam Speaker, I want to say to the Hon. Member, through you, that Canada is, of course, particularly sensitive to the plight of the Polish people and their needs, particularly in relation to foodstuffs. We have constantly been prepared to sell grains and other foodstuffs to Poland, subject to satisfactory credit arrangements for payment. I gather the Hon. Member is not talking about aid, but is talking about credit terms. Obviously our agencies have to be satisfied that there is some possibility of eventual payment before those arrangements are made. Subject to that, and in view of what has been said by Mr. Walesa, I would certainly be prepared to ask our agencies to review the current situation.

SALE OF GRAIN—REQUEST FOR NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Madam Speaker, we know that Poland's international debt is \$25 billion, which is \$65 billion less than that of Brazil. Yet Brazil is buying Canadian grain on credit. Poland was our third largest grain market. Under the circumstances, can the Minister tell us when the Government will proceed with negotiations which would allow the Canadian Wheat Board to sell grain to Poland on credit, as is being done with Brazil?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of State (International Trade)): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member spoke about the question of rescheduling Poland's debts. That is a matter that must be undertaken on a multilateral basis and not just by Canada alone. Canada has always shown that it is prepared to participate in rescheduling on a responsible basis, with other countries. In relation to selling to Poland, the Hon. Member must remember that there are many matters besides the size of the country that decides credibility, when he makes the comparison between Brazil and Poland. Let me tell him that I have a very keen feeling for the Polish people, and if there is any possible way in which we can be more forthcoming on grain sales than we have been, then I am prepared to explore those possibilities fully.