

Oral Questions

[Translation]

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister and concerns the latest events at the GATT talks. Considering the serious concerns of farmers about the agricultural proposals, can the Prime Minister give us the assurance that Canada will continue to defend the same position at GATT, against GATT director Arthur Dunkel?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, indeed our position has not changed and will not change. We are still asking that the multilateral trade negotiations clarify and strengthen article XI of the GATT.

On this issue, all hon. members are well aware of some comments made by certain individuals from Quebec who, for partisan, petty and dishonest reasons, try to misrepresent the position of the Canadian Parliament and government. Those people would like to play politics to the farmers' detriment.

The fact is that we met with Jacques Delors for hours to put forward the Quebec producers' case. I met with President Mitterrand and the Dutch Prime Minister, Mr. Lubbers, to emphasize, on behalf of all members of this House, the importance of this issue for our Canadian and Quebec producers and to say that the current Canadian policies do not constitute trade distorting subsidies that lead to unfair competition. I stressed that those policies made good sense nationally and internationally and added that our producers needed those policies to be vigorously defended. That is precisely what I have done, as Prime Minister of Canada, and it is also what all members of this House, except a few, have always done.

[English]

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Prime Minister that he has not convinced Canada's dairy farmers. At meetings throughout the country dairy farmers have been warned that the government is about to abandon marketing boards.

The gloves are off. From B.C., from Ontario and from Quebec, thousands of farmers are preparing to storm Parliament Hill unless they get an unconditional commitment from this government and this Prime Minister.

I want to ask the Prime Minister on behalf of Canada's farming community: Will he give his unconditional and unequivocal commitment to retain Canada's marketing boards and to stop any plans for tariffication?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure and the fight of putting questions of agriculture and trade distorting subsidies at the G-7 summit in Tokyo in 1986. We have fought the cause of the farmers of Canada, and indeed the consumers of Canada, now for some six or seven years.

In the process of doing that, we have over a period of seven years increased our Canadian assistance to farmers by 650 per cent.

Mr. Lapierre: Where?

Mr. Mulroney: My friend asks: "Where?" Everywhere including Quebec, I want to tell my hon. friend. This government has been fair and extremely supportive of farmers.

With regard to the problems that have developed in respect of article XI, we have maintained a very vigorous defence of these proposals and we will continue to do so. We are one of 108 countries that are signatories of the GATT. Our share of international trade is somewhat slightly in excess of 3 per cent, leaving 97 per cent in the hands of other signatories by and large of the GATT. It is a difficult challenge.

We have been unswerving in our commitment to the interests of Canadian farmers in this regard. We shall continue with the support of all members of the House, or by and large all members of the House, to defend the interests of Canadian farmers. But we need your support on this because we know there are people here who like to trivialize—they sit in the backbench over there—for their own partisan—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap.

[Translation]

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, as we know, Quebec supplies 45 per cent of