

Supply

For the grain sector, I agree with the Minister of Grains and Oilseeds. Obviously, we have defended our position for years and years for the export subsidy war that we have. We all ask for those subsidies that destroyed our agriculture in the west to be put aside.

What I meant when I said that was that it put us in the middle. On the other side, the supply-management system is supported by the opposition and the whole agriculture community across the country. It put us in a more delicate situation and more in the middle. I do not want to be misunderstood.

[Translation]

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House, do I have your permission to put a question to the Minister of State (Agriculture)?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member for Gatineau—La Lièvre to exceed the ten-minute period for questions and comments?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Agreed. The hon. member for Gatineau—La Lièvre.

Mr. Assad: Mr. Minister, in your answer yesterday regarding Canada's position on Article XI in the present GATT talks in Europe and our concerns in this respect, you said in concluding that until the government decided otherwise, it would defend Article XI. I would appreciate an answer from the Minister of State (Agriculture). Does this mean that despite any pressure from other parties, you still have a moral commitment to Canadian farmers to maintain this article which is extremely important for the agricultural industry? Do you have a moral commitment?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question put by the hon. member for Gatineau—La Lièvre, and I would like to clarify Canada's position, because I know there are various rumours doing the rounds about Canada's position on Article XI. Mr. Speaker, Canada's position on Article XI is clear and has not changed one bit. We support Article XI. We want it to be clarified and reinforced, because its present wording, and everyone is agreed on this point, does not give us the kind of

flexibility we would like for our marketing board programs.

The problem, Mr. Speaker—and I think it is useful to repeat this, since it is an important point—the problem is that among those who support this position in Europe and elsewhere, some parties may be more reluctant to support us. However, although some people might have changed their minds, this does not mean that Canada has changed its mind. We have not changed our position. We have no intention of doing so, but we must be vigilant, and I am sure I can count on the hon. member's support. We must be extremely vigilant to ensure that we can maintain a strong position in the international community among 99 or 100 other countries, a position that will be and that continues to be to defend Article XI and to reinforce and clarify it. That is where we are now.

• (1620)

A week or two from now I will in Geneva, Mr. Speaker, to meet the Director General of GATT, and I will also be meeting the President of the *Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec* very shortly, in Europe, to discuss this matter.

[English]

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in this debate today which I think, without question, concerns a very, very important motion.

At the outset I think we should emphasize that this motion was passed in the Standing Committee on Agriculture in the last week in August. It was passed unanimously, which means that all members present and all parties supported this motion at that time. It disappoints me greatly that the Minister of Grains and Oilseeds this morning told this House and Canadians why today his party cannot support the motion. It makes it very clear that in the motion and in the statement following the motion, it would not be considered by anyone as a vote of non-confidence in the government. I think we should make it very clear that the government members said on August 28 or 29—I forget the date—they support the motion, but today they are indicating that when they vote on it next Monday night—I believe it is going to be a deferred vote—they are not going to support it. I think that begs the question of Conservatives, did they mean what they said at the standing committee or not?