

Oral Questions

• (1440)

*[English]***GRAIN EXPORTS**

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Prime Minister. The farm delegation that is here today realizes the government cannot do everything, but there are some things that it can do.

Since the Prime Minister is aware that U.S. grain subsidized by the export enhancement program has resulted in American sales in Canadian markets in North Africa, the Mediterranean area, the Philippines and elsewhere, will the government agree to the request of the farm coalition and lead a Canadian lobby group to Washington in order to seek agreement that despite what the Europeans may do, that North Americans, who are still the dominant players in grain exports, will not drop prices in each other's traditional markets?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, we do that on a regular basis, raise with the Americans the concerns we have over how they use their export enhancement program.

I should also point out to the member that if he is concerned about the Americans, and he should be and we all are—I can give him examples of what they have done in Algeria with Durum—he should be equally more concerned about the Europeans. The Europeans now are regularly subsidizing exports to the tune of almost \$200 a tonne where the Americans do not subsidize everything. When they do their subsidies run as high as \$60 and \$70 a tonne.

We have been making our case with the Americans, and at the same time raising considerably more commotion with the Europeans over what I view to be the largest problem in international markets and that is export subsidies by the Europeans.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Surely the Prime Minister is not going to sit out a Question Period which is trying to address a major crisis—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member will put his question but that is an improper imputation.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The minister of health has said that the government only has so much money to spend on children. The fact of the matter is that 49 per cent of the people who are using the food banks which are springing up all over prairies and rural Canada are children.

I ask the Prime Minister: Is he going to make the commitment today to eradicate food banks on the prairies or does he want food banks to become monuments to his term in office?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I think once again that the hon. member raises rather the issue of poverty itself, particularly in relation to children and food banks. Again, food banks are mechanisms of last resort and I think everybody agrees with that. However, in the present circumstances, I repeat what I said earlier: The government presently invests more than \$15 billion in programs aimed directly at children both through tax measures and direct programs. I think Canadians as a whole should assume responsibility for the fight against poverty, especially through an improvement in the economic situation. I think that we all agree on that, but again, we must do it through the means at our disposal, particularly at the financial level.

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*[English]***REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It concerns the deepening crisis in the Cape Breton economy.