

Oral Questions

attitude does Canada intend to take toward the important discussions now going on in committee No. 3?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): In my statement at the conference I made it clear that Canada took a very positive attitude toward improving the terms of trade as they affect developing countries in terms of agricultural products. That is the general position. We understand there is a great deal of interest at the conference among the developing nations in the whole question of trade and we look forward to the upcoming GATT trade negotiations as an appropriate and effective forum in which these trade matters can be dealt with. At that forum Canada will, of course, continue to show the positive attitude which was indicated in Rome.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Is it Canada's intention, as apparently was indicated at a private meeting yesterday, to block or filibuster the discussions in committee No. 3 during consideration of the trade proposals put forward by Mexico on behalf of the group of 77? Does Canada still propose to encourage other countries to talk out the proposals so that none of these motions will come to a vote in the committee? Is it true that Canada did move to present a filibuster in committee No. 3?

Mr. MacEachen: No, Mr. Speaker. I was not present at the conference yesterday, but it was not the intention of the Canadian delegation to filibuster or to undertake blocking tactics. We do believe, however, that the proper forum is the GATT and we shall press, through the GATT for these and other benefits to be made available to developing countries.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I do not believe the minister replied to the specific question whether Canada did, in fact, encourage other countries of the developed world yesterday to participate in a filibuster? Is that not true?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, now that the hon. gentleman puts the question in those terms, certainly I can say I have no knowledge of that and I would be tremendously surprised if that did take place. If such did take place, it would be a change in the attitude that we had adopted during the period that I was in Rome. Specifically, I will inquire whether any motion or action was taken that might be remotely interpreted in that light.

WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE IN ROME—REQUEST FOR DETAILS OF CANADA'S COMMITMENTS TO SUPPLY ONE MILLION TONS OF GRAIN PER YEAR

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In terms of Canada's pledge of a million tons of grain per year, I believe it is, can the minister of external affairs tell the House whether Canada is prepared at this time to handle and to move that grain to the destinations, and also to see that this one million tons of grain is properly distributed to those countries so there is no waste whatever? Has Canada given this matter broad and thorough thought? Are we prepared to act on this, and when will we start this kind of program?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

knows, there was a proposal put before the conference by the secretary general of the conference requesting the world community to commit itself for a three-year period, commencing next year, to a total of 10 million metric tons per year in volume terms. Canada responded to this request by undertaking to commit itself to one million tons per year—certainly more than its proportional share—for each of these three years, commencing with the next fiscal year. This involves, as my hon. friend knows, a very substantial increase in financial outlay over any previous year. This particular flow will, of course, begin within the time span indicated.

Mr. Murta: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I really want to ask the same question I asked originally; the minister seemed to be hedging somewhat. I asked him whether Canada is at the present time physically prepared to handle this grain and to move it out of Canada to other countries. In addition, will we be supervising the distribution of this grain to these other countries, or will the grain be turned over to authorities in the recipient countries who will go ahead and distribute the grain? I should like a little more specific information.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, part of the Canadian commitment at the world food conference was also in response to a recommendation by the secretary general, namely that we would undertake to provide at least 20 per cent of our food aid through multilateral channels. Therefore, 20 per cent of this grain or food aid will be distributed through multilateral channels. The remainder will be distributed on a bilateral basis, and Canada will do its utmost, in co-operation with the recipient countries, to ensure that none of this precious food is wasted.

I should like to get some more information on one point, and that is with respect to the cost of carrying the grain.

WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE IN ROME—CANADIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS UNITED STATES PROPOSAL TO FORM GROUPS OF FOOD EXPORTING COUNTRIES

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. What is the position of the government of Canada on the proposal of Secretary of State Kissinger for what, in effect, would be a cartel of food exporting countries? Can we be assured that Canada will not be part of any such cartel, and that less developed countries would be represented on any authority which distributed food? My hesitancy in framing the question is due to the discussions that went on, which make it very difficult to put a question.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there is no intention on the part of the Canadian delegation to support an international cartel. I believe the secretary general of FAO did convene a meeting of food exporting countries which had as its purpose really to monitor and examine the world food situation and world needs at the present time. In so far as any monitoring mechanism as to the existence of supplies and the need of recipients is concerned, then of course we would support that aspect of it, but not in the sense the hon. member has mentioned.