

is on this subject. I said also that I would consider the proposal. I think that is the answer the member wants.

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EAST GERMANY

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Immigration and it concerns the continuing mass exodus of East Germans to the West.

A month ago in the House in response to a question that I posed, the minister promised on a priority basis to deal with the German Canadian community in signing a master agreement through which to sponsor East Germans. On October 26 the minister, in a meeting with the Canadian German Congress, flatly refused this request.

Why has the government refused to support such a comprehensive group sponsorship package by the German Canadian community when it enjoys overwhelming support throughout Canada and when the community is prepared to take full responsibility for it?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, when I met with the German Canadian Congress I expressed to them, as I would express in the House today, our interest in helping in any way we can with the situation of the East Germans who are leaving East Germany.

As the hon. member knows, these people automatically have citizenship in West Germany which is what most of them are seeking. We are prepared to help in any way we can. I have offered and discussed with the German Canadian Congress a master agreement to help bring East Germans here. We will pull out all the stops to help the Canadian German Congress and the East Germans who think they would like to live in Canada.

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is I do not know where she is pulling out all the stops, because no one has seen the stops yet.

The minister has told the Canadian German Congress that she is only going to be interested in helping independent applications, which is no help because that is part of the criteria anyway. Given that previous governments in historical movements in eastern Europe, be it in Hungary, Poland or Czechoslovakia, have permitted thousands of migrants to come to Canada, why

has her immigration policy completely ignored the historical movements going on in eastern Europe today, ignored the pleas and requests of the Canadian German community, and ignored and refused to be a relevant player in the unfolding drama in eastern Europe? Why, Madam Minister?

• (1510)

Mrs. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, I think that our government has been quite the reverse on the events that are going on in eastern Europe, whether it is in East Germany, Poland, Hungary or in other countries.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Prime Minister, and myself have all been very active in putting forward things that Canada can be doing to help. That includes immigration and it includes all of eastern Europe, not just East Germany.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture who tabled a document this morning outlining a review of Canadian agricultural policy that does not address the main problem facing rural Canada, notably unsustainable farm debt.

Why did the minister choose to ignore this growing problem, especially since the immediate impact of his market-driven policy paper that he advocates would make the debt problem even worse?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we have not overlooked the problem nor do we intend to in the future.

What is a fact is that farm arrears have been reduced this year over last year by 21 per cent. Farm bankruptcies have dropped by 41 per cent in 1989 versus 1984. So there is progress.

In September, we placed a moratorium on foreclosures. In January 1985, we put an \$80 million, 4 per cent interest rate reduction program into effect. In 1985, we introduced shared risk mortgages. We established the Farm Debt Review Boards. Well over 6,000 accounts have been handled, 75 per cent successfully.