

Oral Questions

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): In addition to that we have been holding public hearings on the NAFTA starting in late November right through till last month. We have been in nine cities and met with 120 different groups of people presenting their views both pro and con the agreement. It is on that basis we believe it is time we get this bill into the House and into committee where people can study the specific elements of the agreement and get by the posturing of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, most of those 120 groups that had a chance to participate were limited to five or ten minute presentations and he knows that. The government also made it very clear that the committee's role was going to be very limited and very short-lived. Of course the New Democratic caucus said no to that.

My supplementary question is: How can this government accept any responsibility of decent democracy? How can it say that, if it is going to limit debate on an issue of this importance to less than two days?

What is the purpose of parliamentary democracy if we are not allowed to speak for a reasonable amount of time on an issue that is so important to so many Canadians and to so many Canadian communities?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, as my seat-mate, the Minister for International Trade, has pointed out, a committee that has been looking at the NAFTA deal since last November toured the country. I have made offers to the House leadership of the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party to have the whole deal referred to a committee a couple of weeks ago so that it could study—

Mr. Barrett: Tell the truth. You used closure. We were lied to in that committee.

Mr. Speaker: I may not have heard what I think I heard, but I do not want to hear it again. The hon. minister has the floor.

Mr. Andre: In fact I made an offer to—

Mr. Barrett: We were lied to in that committee. You tell the truth.

An hon. member: You were not around, Dave. You were in Mexico.

Some hon. members: Out, out.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the hon. member who has a great deal of experience, not just in this House but also in the legislature of our province which we care for very much, would know that he has gone too far.

• (1445)

I know he feels very strongly about this and that is why, of course, we have debate. I would ask the hon. member to withdraw the allegation.

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I refuse to withdraw that the government lied to us and to me about that—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I might ask the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party whether that position is the position of her party in the House today.

Mr. Barrett: I speak for myself. I do not speak for my party. We were lied to.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member could remain in his seat and we will discuss this at the end of Question Period.

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CROW BENEFIT

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister who met with the premier of Alberta last week.

There are reports that the federal government is making a move toward a change in the method of paying the Crow benefit. This comes after many consultations involving senior levels of government and farm organizations.

By the way, those consultations did not produce a consensus on how to proceed, if at all, on this issue. Now, however, there are indications that the federal government is prepared to bring in legislation.

My question for the Deputy Prime Minister is this. Are we to assume that all the major stakeholders involved have agreed to the changes and, if not, why is the government proceeding without a crucial consensus?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that this has been a topic of discussion for a number of years, probably going back at least 15 years. We presently have discussions under way with all of the provinces. Many of the people involved are trying to reach a national consensus around an over-all payment through a NISA type approach.