

The reason we are in this mess is the previous Government, of which that Member was a part, did absolutely nothing about it. We are not doing that. We are accepting our responsibility, and are intending to do something about it.

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, the Minister can no longer get away with that kind of excuse. The sugar-beet growers who are in town today expected action two months ago from the Government and did not get it. Will there be action this week? Will it be positive action? Will the Government provide direct, immediate assistance to sugar-beet growers before they go out of business because of government inaction?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member referred to an excuse. If there ever was anyone to ask for an excuse on behalf of agriculture, it is that Member. He has been in the House since last November, and this is the second time he has asked a question on agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Axworthy: Just take some action on it.

Mr. Mayer: We will have a decision this week and we hope that it will be favourable—

Some Hon. Members: Hope!

Mr. Mayer: —because we are interested in agriculture. When that Member was responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, he did not even know enough to sign papers to get the cash advances out, so western farmers had to wait an extra month. Let's not talk about action; we'll get some.

TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same Minister. On March 11 the Minister of Agriculture, in reply to a question of mine concerning the future of the sugar-beet industry in Manitoba, Alberta, and Quebec, replied that he hoped to have an announcement to make within the next week. The Minister, speaking for the Government today, said perhaps this week. What happened to the last three weeks when the Minister promised that there would be a clear-cut policy from the Government? What will the policy be? Instead of just hopes, could we have a guarantee of what the announcement will be, and when?

An Hon. Member: Sweeten it up, Charlie.

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, for the first time the federal Government is taking the sugar-beet industry seriously.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mayer: I know as well as anyone that ideally we would have liked to have a decision sooner. We know that. That is why the growers are here today. However, the point is that we are still in the process of deciding, and we will have a decision this week.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, since the process of deciding is still ongoing, and since the Minister of Agriculture indicated that he would have a decision within a week, more than four weeks ago, could the Minister tell us what are the problems? What is holding up the decision? What new information has made the promise of the Minister of Agriculture non-existent?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, again, for the first time we are looking at the prospects of developing a long-range sugar policy. One certainly does not do those kinds of things overnight, as I quickly found out. If the Hon. Member looked into it, he would find that out as well. I went into it with every intention of having something done as quickly as we possibly could, certainly sooner than this. Ideally we would have liked an answer sooner than this, but the point is that we are looking at a long-range policy and those kinds of things are not developed overnight.

As I said, we must have a decision this week because the season for planting sugar-beets is upon us. If we do not plant sugar-beets this year, we will lose a very important industry.

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APARTHEID

SOUTH AFRICA—REQUEST FOR ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Considering the serious escalation in South Africa—every day we have more reports of killings, riots, and human rights violations, a very real threat to peace internationally—is the Government now ready to re-examine its policy, to implement economic sanctions against South Africa, and to implement a mandatory program with respect to Canadians doing business in South Africa, all this to help in the battle against apartheid and to bring justice to the black African citizens of South Africa?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as I have reported on previous occasions in the House, indeed the Government is undertaking a very thorough review of the appropriate Canadian policy toward South Africa. That review is under way now. Its purpose is to do everything effective that we can to reduce the sin and crime of apartheid.