

Oral Questions

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade as well.

The Minister of Agriculture said a few minutes ago that the Minister for International Trade's statement yesterday was made with tongue in cheek. I would suggest that it was probably made with foot in mouth, and perhaps some of his own colleagues could treat him for that.

The minister's figure that was quoted yesterday included the cost of provincial programs. It included the cost of border protection, research and development in the agri-food industry, and food inspection, all of which are costs that benefit all Canadians.

Is the minister saying that these expenditures are bad expenditures and bad ways to spend Canadian tax dollars?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, this is really a shocking display of lack of study by the members of the agricultural caucus, if they have an agricultural caucus in the Official Opposition.

Canada is trying to achieve the doing away of export subsidy assistance, which is at present ruining our Canadian exporting farmers. The Canadian Wheat Board, which offered an initial price at the start of the season of, I think, \$135 a tonne, is having to sell far below that because of the ruinous export subsidized competition between the European Community and the United States. For four years now we have been trying to put an end to that. The hon. gentleman opposite does not realize it.

We intend to try to do away with trade distorting subsidies. Income support and protection for farmers and other programs that are not trade distorting, yes, we will support 100 per cent and continue to support, but we want our own farmers to be saved from this atrocious subsidized competition presently hammering them into the ground when they have the second best crop in their history. Wake up, man.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. Possibly he can have a briefing with the minister who just spoke.

The minister knows full well that the statement made and the figures given by the Minister for International Trade yesterday left the wrong impression and gives an incorrect impression about the amount of money spent by the government to assist agriculture and Canadian farmers. It is really doing a disservice to Canadian farmers at this stage going into the round at GATT.

• (1440)

Why did the minister not stand immediately yesterday and correct his colleague, or does he agree with the statement he made yesterday?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it is widely recognized in the outside world—I do not know if the hon. gentleman is in the world outside or inside—that this Minister of Agriculture has been the most expensive Minister of Agriculture in Canada's history.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Crosbie: I was feeling sympathetic with the Minister of Finance yesterday.

Why does the hon. gentleman think that the President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, our biggest farm group, said that he can strongly support its general thrust, when speaking of our offer at the GATT? Does that not tell him anything?

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Agriculture who, eleven months ago, was quoted as saying in *The Ottawa Citizen* and in the *Calgary Herald*:

This government is committed to the principles of supply-management and that includes border protection for the commodities.

Before the GATT yesterday, Canada proposed to open the borders for dairy and poultry products. What happened in the intervening year? Why the policy reversal?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty clear that the position that the federal government has taken with respect to the supply-management systems in Canada is a position that, not only secures the retention of the supply-management system in Canada, but indeed strengthens the existence of the supply-management system. It was under threat as a result of the existing Article XI, which