

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Prairie Canadians watched our government go to the GATT talks on agriculture subsidies understanding that regional development programs like the Crow rate system were exempt from definition as a subsidy. That assurance is still in the main body of the GATT proposal. However, I note that an annex, 7-E, has been added to the Dunkel proposal which may make the Crow subject to subsidy reduction commitments.

What, if anything, has the Government of Canada done to remove that sentence from the annex and leave our Crow rate subsidy as an exempt regional development program?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): I am very pleased that the hon. member now is aware of what is in the Dunkel text. Some of his colleagues in the province of Saskatchewan have not made the effort to read what is in the Dunkel text.

Canada has suggested that regional development, when we argue for regional development, should be exempt in the GATT talks. We have continued that discussion since the Dunkel text came out. I think the hon. member understands that when it is written into a text, and the definition of export subsidies is defined in a text, the Canadian people, particularly the farmers in western Canada who would be impacted, should have that information.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Yes, I agree they should indeed. My text, like the ones I presume Saskatchewan got, did not have the annex. We have it now.

Some groups close to the government party in the west are urging the issuing of a bond or annuity to buy out the Crow policy which at 8 per cent would have a present value of more than \$9 billion. Will the minister tell us if this is in fact the government's intention and, if so, where it will get the funds?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): As the hon. member is aware, when agriculture ministers met in Kananaskis last July, a decision was made to have a series of talks called transportation talks throughout the Canadian Wheat Board and, indeed, throughout Canada

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to discuss how the money that the people of Canada, through the taxpayers of Canada, some \$720 million, was being used in agriculture. Was it the best way to use it, as a *status quo*, in paying the railroads, or were some of the other options that had been debated an alternative that producers should talk about?

One member says no, and I understand why. I can understand that there are other things that people are not discussing. That includes pooling, MCRs, and further activity in enhancing our system of handling in the west. The talks are ongoing.

The member asks a question that is based on something that may not happen, that may not be a route that would be taken by the government or the producers particularly. I think it is inappropriate to attempt to answer it.

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GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Dairy and poultry farmers face the destruction of their farms, their homes, their livelihood, unless the government is willing to fight to maintain and strengthen article XI in the GATT negotiations going on this month.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to meet with the heads of Japan and the other five countries that support Canada's position to maintain and strengthen article XI so as to issue a joint declaration calling on the GATT negotiators to maintain a strengthened article XI in the new GATT agreement.

Is the Prime Minister willing to meet with those people and prepare such a declaration?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have already met with Jacques Delors, the President of the European commission. I have had lengthy meetings with President Mitterrand and President Bush, and I had lengthy conversations just before Christmas with Ruud Lubbers, the Prime Minister of Holland who is also Chairman of the European commission. In the course of these very lengthy conversations we set forward again the importance of article XI to Canadian producers and, indeed, the importance of these producers to the social fibre of Canada, how they have evolved as part of our country and the importance